

FREE

Kent on Sunday

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WEEKLY FREE NEWSPAPER OF THE YEAR

Mid edition No 637



London and South of England Media Awards

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Lord Sugar's boardroom

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Why promise £17m if it takes 15 years to raise it?

LAST Christmas was a somewhat traumatic one for the county.

Cast your mind back and you will no doubt remember the storm that heralded the dawn of Christmas Eve in such dramatic and destructive fashion.

The flooding between Maidstone and Tonbridge saw many forced to swap plans for a cosy, relaxing and warm holiday season for one of stress and strain as they had to literally flee their homes as the water levels rose.

The agony and pain of that process will be one they don't want to repeat – and no-one else who lives in this beautiful county of ours would wish upon their worse enemy.

Yet it would appear, as is so often the case, that the big talk to resolve issues may be turning into a damp squib.

Securing £17m of Government



Editor **Chris Britcher**

funding was a great result. But when you then consider that money may not be accessed for another 15 years because it needs to be matched by a cash-strapped county council, you wonder if it will slip through our fingers like, well, water.

It's nothing short of staggering the length of time vulnerable homes may have to wait. The floods of last year may well have been a one in a hundred year event, but if there's one thing we've seen plenty of evidence of in recent years it is that the

weather is serving up plenty of unpredictable levels of behaviour. Who would bet against it happening again over the next decade?

Those who made bold promises ought to be asking themselves some pretty probing questions this weekend. You can read more about this inside.

Enjoy your weekend.

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EDF ENERGY London and South of England Media Awards

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HOW TO CONTACT US...

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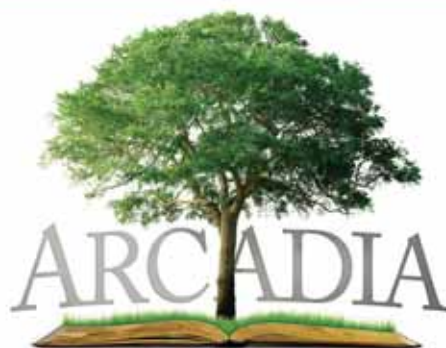
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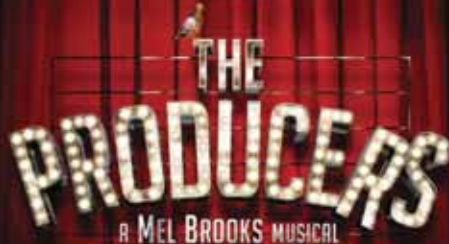


BY TOM STOPPARD

**OLIVIER AWARD WINNING
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MON 23 - SAT 28 FEB



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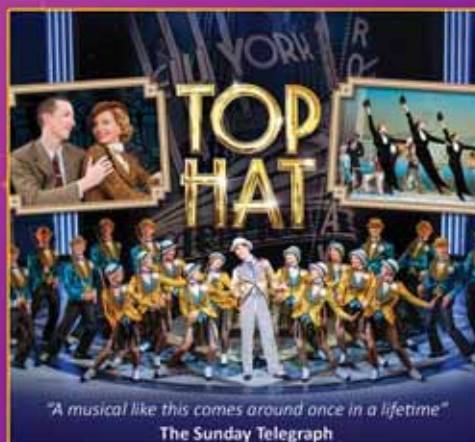
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Final nail in Manston's coffin as CPO hopes die

By Maria Chiorando

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THE HOPES of Manston Airport supporters may have been dashed for good.

This follows news that Thanet District Council is unlikely to continue its attempts to buy the site using a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), where certain bodies are able to obtain land or property without the consent of the owner.

The airport has been a hub of controversy since Scottish business woman and Stagecoach owner Ann Gloag bought it for £1 in October, 2013.

Despite saying she would keep the air port open for two years, it closed its doors for the last time in May this year, with around 140 job losses.

Although American investment company RiverOak made three offers to buy the airport, rumoured to range between £5 and £7 million, Ms Gloag would not sell the business, and it lay dormant for several months, until a majority stake was bought in September for an undisclosed amount, by Trevor Cartner and Chris Musgrave – the



GLORY DAYS: Before the business was closed

team behind Discovery Park.

They plan to develop the site as a mixed-use area, with retail, residential and warehouse capacity, with a public consultation starting next year.

In a meeting next week, cabinet members will consider a report saying the CPO should not go ahead as a suitable partner cannot be found. The council needed a third-party partner to cover all the costs incurred by a CPO.

The report follows a test exercise carried out by the council. RiverOak had publicly said it would provide the financial support.

Thanet North MP Sir Roger Gale, who has been one of the louder voices in the bid to save the airport, has blasted the council.

He said: "Aside from the gross discourtesy to all of those who have supported the Manston cause, there are huge questions that remain unanswered by the leader

and executive of the council in respect of their implied criticisms of RiverOak and they will have to be held to account.

"Central government and local MPs have given massive political support to the council and only on Monday of his week Laura Sandys and I were at 10 Downing Street discussing how further assistance, once the CPO process was under way, to help rescue the airport might be offered."

Rail season ticket fare price-hike but variety of off-peak prices drop

COMMUTERS are facing up to another 2.5 per cent hike in rail fares in the new year.

The average price rise across the network will be 2.2 per cent – the lowest for five years, the rail industry confirmed on Friday.

Regulated fares, which include season tickets and walk-up singles and long-distance returns, will rise by 2.5 per cent.

That will mean a commuter in Sevenoaks, for example, currently paying £3,208 for their annual season, will pay £3,288 in January.

Michael Roberts, director general of the Rail Delivery Group which represents rail operators and Network Rail, said: "Money from fares goes towards running and maintaining the railway. This benefits not just passengers and businesses but communities across the country, by improving journeys, creating employment and helping to boost the economy.

"Over the next five years, Network Rail is spending on average £27m a

day on a better railway, alongside commitments made by train companies to improve services. That will mean more seats, better stations and improved journeys.

"For every pound spent on fares, 97p goes on track, train, staff and other costs while 3p goes in profits earned by train companies for running services on Europe's fastest growing railway.

"The industry is continuing to work together to get more for every pound we invest to enable government to make fares decisions which work best for passengers."

In a bid to soften the blow, South-eastern has also announced a freeze on some off-peak fares for 2015.

The new expanded offer means the cost of a return off peak journey between Margate and London is cut from £32.90 to £22.40 – a 32 percent price reduction. The train operator also announced it will offer advance, discounted, fares for the first time in 2015.

Inmate death sparks fresh probe into Sheppey prison

A PRISONER at Sheppey's Elmley prison has become the third to die in the jail in as many weeks, according to the Prison Officers' Association.

It is reported that the inmate's body was found on Tuesday. The Independent Prisons and Probation Ombudsman will conduct an investigation into the death.

There have been a total of nine

deaths in the jail since the beginning of the year.

The prison was criticised last month when a report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons (HMIP) said that staffing levels were inadequate leading to potential violence, and high-risk inmates were not being properly assessed or managed. Overcrowding was also criticised in the report.

TV hit QI confirms special one-off performance at uni

A SPECIAL one-off version of hit BBC TV quiz show QI is to be held at the University of Kent as part of the institution's 50th birthday celebrations.

The line up will include regulars Alan Davies, Sandi Toksvig, Jo Brand and Phill Jupitus.

Stephen Fry will not be present, but his place will be taken by the show's creator and producer, John Lloyd.

The performance will take place

at the university's Canterbury campus on February 9.

Joining the line-up will be Dr Oliver Double, the university's senior lecturer in drama and theatre.

Tickets go on sale on Monday priced at £25 each. All profits will go towards the Kent Opportunity Fund, which supports scholarships, projects and bursaries for students in financial hardship.



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Empty home scheme's record-breaking year

THE No Use Empty scheme is on track for a record year with some 650 homes set to be brought back onto the market.

The scheme, which is run in partnership with 12 local authorities across the county, aims to take empty or abandoned homes and bring them back into use.

Launched in 2005, No Use Empty has returned more

than 3,500 empty homes to date, reducing the total number in Kent to around 5,840.

The initiative was the first in the UK to offer financial assistance to owners willing to refurbish properties empty for over six months, and return them to use.

Administered by KCC, it offers up to £25,000 in interest free funding per housing unit created.

Bid to get Crossrail plans for county on track for upcoming developments

by Tim Miles

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COUNCIL chiefs in north Kent are combining forces in a bid to get the ambitious Crossrail project extended.

Crossrail is a 73-mile railway line which aims to provide a new link from the west of London to the east.

It will stretch from Berkshire and Buckinghamshire, go via central London, and extend to south east London and Essex.

Building work is already under way, with the project set to see its first service by 2018.

Currently, the service will end at Abbey Wood, in the London borough of Bexley, to link up to the North Kent line.

But now the Conservative leader of Dartford Borough Council, Jeremy Kite, and the Labour leader of Gravesham Borough Council, John Burden, have teamed up to get the link extended.

They say it would be 'short-sighted' to ignore the benefits the service



EXTENDED: in here

could bring not only to existing communities but also for planned major projects.

Among them the proposals to build 15,000 new homes at the Ebbs-

fleet garden city development and the London Paramount Resort being planned for Swanscombe.

Cllr Burden said, "Although the current proposals halt at Abbey Wood, the route is safeguarded through our two towns so I hope it means we are pushing at an open door.

"Both Gravesham and Dartford have huge growth potential but we can only ask local people to meet the challenges ahead if they know that the local transport systems can cope. Part of that should be Crossrail."

Cllr Kite added: "There is no way that any serious economy could accept a new rail network that stopped a few miles short of two major residential and leisure destinations.

"John and I are making the case at every opportunity and I am cautiously optimistic that we have been successful in getting our message across. It is certainly being discussed seriously now and I hope we don't have to wait too long for some progress."



SINGER: Tickets went on sale Friday

Elton John set for Detling show next May

MUSIC legend Elton John confirmed this week he is to play a major show in Kent next year – his first in the county since performing at Canterbury's St Lawrence Ground in 2006.

The star, whose hits stretch across five decades, will perform at the Kent Event Centre at the Kent Showground at Detling.

He will run through his hits on Sunday, May 31.

He said: "My band and I are very much looking forward to returning to Kent. I cannot believe it has been eight years since we last played there...too long!

"The fans in the south east have always made me feel very welcome during my several shows in the county, and I can't wait to bring our show to the Kent Event Centre. I am sure we will all have a fantastic time."

Previous Kent shows include Leeds Castle.

Alison Wallington, event centre manager for the Kent Event Centre, said: "I know that the addition of the Elton John Show will prove to be a firm favourite with all our customers and the community of Kent."

Tickets for the show went on sale on Friday morning, priced between £44.50 and £88.50.

M2 chaos after lanes closed for three days

MOTORISTS faced three days of delays on the M2 between Faversham and Canterbury this week after a car transporter spilt its load of cars as it smashed through the central reservation of the busy motorway.

The incident took place during the Tuesday night rush hour, as the transporter tried to avoid a crash between two other cars.

But as it careered into the central reservation, it took out around 240 metres of barriers.

Remarkably, just four people picked up minor injuries despite the carnage.

However, it forced a lane on both the coast-bound and London-bound section, between the Brenley Corner turn-off for Canterbury and the Faversham junction, to be closed until Thursday evening, and a temporary speed limit on the other, while repair work was carried out.

Highways Agency staff worked overnight to concrete in 80 new posts and install the new barrier.

Blaze on train sparks station evacuation

FIRE crews had to tackle a blaze on a rush-hour train on Wednesday night which forced the closure of a station.

The fire broke out on the 5.56pm Victoria to Dartford service.

As it arrived at Denmark Hill all passengers and staff were led off the train and the station evacuated.

It is believed eight carriages were affected, with crews bringing the fire under control within an hour of the train arriving.

A spokesman for Southeastern said: "An investigation into the incident is already under way and involves both the track and the train.

"At this stage it is too early to speculate on the cause of the incident."

There were no reports of any passenger or crew being injured.

It comes less than two weeks after another fire on a Southeastern train which forced London mainline station Charing Cross to close over a weekend for two hours.

Air ambulance given £1.5m for helicopter

AIR ambulance chiefs are set to cash in on a £1.5million cash windfall courtesy of Chancellor George Osborne – enough to fund the purchase of a new aircraft.

Using funding from fines levied on financial institutions to influence the LIBOR lending rate, the charity will get £1.5m while the Great Western Air Ambulance Trust will receive £1m.

The service's chief executive Adrian Bell said the move was a "very clear and ringing endorsement of the critical service this charity provides to its patients".

He added: "It is also eloquent recognition of the need to ensure the long-term resilience and sustainability of this vital emergency service funded as it is through charitable donation rather than NHS finances. As well as being extremely grateful to the Chancellor for this support, the charity is also hugely appreciative of his move to exempt all air ambulance charity expenditure from VAT.

"This will release about £100,000 per year directly to frontline services rather than the Exchequer."

agenda

What will make next week's headlines...

Historians reveal all about the 1914 'truce'

THIS First World War story has long been the stuff of folklore, and now even a supermarket is using it to sell chocolate, but did the truce of 1914 really happen?

Many people believe that in December of that year, troops from both sides downed weapons to play football.

Professor Mark Connelly of the University of Kent, a leading expert on the Great War, has carried out research on the historical evidence which surrounds what actually happened.

He will present his findings at a one-day public symposium at the University of Kent on Friday.



December 12. It will take place from 10am-3pm at the Canterbury campus and is open to all but places are limited and must be reserved via email: gateways@kent.ac.uk.

Check train times and disruption this Yuletide

COMMUTERS and travellers are being urged to take steps now to check if major work at London Bridge over Christmas will have an impact on their plans.

As part of the on-going transformation of the London terminal, a number of services will not stop from Monday,

December 22 with some services diverted instead to Blackfriars.

In addition, travellers should check in the weeks leading up to the festive break about changes to the normal timetable on key days such as Christmas Eve and earlier final trains home from London.

...also

Wimpy Kid book signing

AUTHOR of the global best-selling Diary of a Wimpy Kid series will be signing copies of his latest book at Bluewater on Friday.

Jeff Kinney will be at Waterstones at 5pm to sign The Long Haul - the latest Wimpy Kid book just released.

Forum at village hall

THE Sheppey Local Engagement Forum will meet on Tuesday night at Leysdown Village Hall.

It provides residents with access to local and county council officials and police and fire representatives. It starts at 7pm.

KCC council meeting

COUNTY councillors will gather at County Hall on Thursday for a full meeting of Kent County Council.

The meeting in Maidstone gets under way at 10am and will be webcast live on the internet. It's due to end at 4.30pm.

Lego league robot task

SCHOOLS will compete in the Kent-leg of the First Lego League regional finals on Wednesday and Thursday.

Thirty teams, representing schools from across the county will compete in a task to build specialist Lego robots.



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Felipe fired from BBC's Apprentice

Fresh from the popular TV show, the Kings Hill solicitor explains why he's glad to be back home after Lord Sugar showed him the door in this week's programme

By Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

APPRENTICE hopeful Felipe Alviar-Baquero saw his dreams of becoming Lord Sugar's business partner disappear in a puff of smoke this week after he was told he was "fired" from the BBC1 television show.

But the solicitor from West Malling told KoS this week he had no regrets about his time on the prime time hit.

The Apprentice pits the wits and business acumen of 20 candidates against one another by tackling a series of tasks.

Each week a candidate is booted out of the process, with eventually one winner emerging triumphant and going into business with entrepreneur Alan Sugar. Success sees the business guru invest £250,000 into the venture.

Colombian-born Mr Alviar-Baquero, 33, who lives in Kings Hill with his wife and two young children, came a cropper in episode nine of the show after his team had been tasked with buying nine items for as little money as possible.

Designed to showcase their negotiating prowess, he saw his team-mates turn on him after, when tasked with buying a full-size anatomical skeleton, he opted instead to buy a make-your-own paper one.

In the showdown with Lord Sugar, he failed to see Mr Alviar-Baquero's argument that it matched the criteria and so fined his team. It meant they lost the task and it was the Kent candidate who was then 'fired'.

But unlike many candidates, he emerged from the process with his dignity and reputation intact, being described by all involved in the show as a gentleman and like a father figure in the house the candidates shared.

Speaking to KoS after his exit, he said: "I don't regret being a good guy in the show. I have always said, I am Felipe, and I want to be myself, stay true to myself. That, for me is the important thing, and I am not going to change for anyone. That just isn't my style. I believe that the thing which defines your life are the principles you take with you."

"That was always so important to me when I was growing up in Colombia. It was something which I saw in my mother, and which I wanted to

carry on.

"And I do that, because my biggest concern is that I make my family and my daughters proud of me. I won't do that by corrupting who I am, and even if Lord Sugar had come to me, and said, 'if you stab someone in the back, you will win', I would not and could not have done it."

It's that kind of easy going attitude, and reluctance to embrace the stereotype of the typical narcissistic Apprentice candidate which led to Mr Alviar-Baquero being popular in the house. But, he says, it wasn't an easy place to interact with fellow contestants.

He told KoS: "I was very lucky to get on with everyone, but it is difficult in the house. There are lots of restrictions about talking with fellow contestants, and a lot of different rules to follow. I have seen media reports about romances in the house, but I never actually saw anything."

"When I wasn't working on projects, I spent a lot of time cooking which I really enjoyed. It was good, because other people in the house also enjoyed it, but actually, there wasn't much time for us to really spend in each other's company."

"What you see in the house, is actually what happens. When the cameras show us in our pyjamas running for the phone, that is how it is. We were really sleep deprived a lot of the time, and there was a lot of pressure throughout the programme, with constant tasks. It was difficult to really unwind as we were living it."

Mr Alviar-Baquero also says that he has great respect for the programme, telling KoS that it was always an inspiration to him.

He said: "This programme is a machine, and I absolutely admire everyone who works on it. The concept is wonderful, as it is inspirational for people who want to start out as entrepreneurs, and the people who work on it are incredible. The runners, and cameramen and everyone involved in its production are fantastic and work so hard to create a really great show that people can watch and be entertained by."

But, says Mr Baquero-Alviar, he feels that sometimes there are issues with it nonetheless. He told KoS that because each episode has to squeeze so much into just one hour, it can end up sucking some of the important details out.

He said: "I think that maybe they should show slightly more of the busi-



FAMILY MAN: Felipe with daughter Isabella, 7, daughter Sophia, 4, and wife Jennie. Pic: Shutterstock Photography

ness processes which take place in the show. There are a lot of detailed calculations to work out costings and other things which get missed because it has to be so tightly packed into each episode.

"That means that sometimes, it looks really easy, when in actual fact, the tasks are incredibly difficult. The show where we had to come up with a soft drink in New York and then advertise it was difficult and actually had a huge amount missed out."

"You have to work on so many different things, which is hard when you don't necessarily have any experience of them. Creating an advert was really tough for me, and the show didn't necessarily reflect how many skills I needed to draw into the project."

"Also, the task to buy the items looked like it was really easy on TV, but actually it was immensely difficult. We were all working under this massive time pressure, and having to make snap decisions quickly. We needed to perform in some very difficult situations. It certainly wasn't easy."

Despite that pressure throughout the competition, Mr Alviar-Baquero feels his work should have saved him during his final boardroom battle.

He told KoS: "I was very disappointed when I was fired. When you look at my performance from the start of the show, I was a really strong contender. I gave 100 per cent throughout and I thought that really showed with the work I did."

"I went on to the show to try and inspire other people to get into business, like I was inspired by the show, and even though I didn't win, I really hope that I've managed to do that."

Now he's out of the show, he's determined to push ahead with his business plans.

He said: "I'm going to have a busy future. I still fully intend to continue with my business proposition, which was very different to any of the other contestants' ideas. I want to launch a



DOWN BUT NOT OUT: Feeling the pressure on Wednesday's show



FRICTION: Tempers flare, but Apprentice star says he regrets nothing

range of new play areas for children, which will be inclusive and allow every child to play, whether they are disabled or have any physical issues. It is a shame I didn't get to be Lord Sugar's partner, as my proposition could have led to a revolution in children's play areas. We owe something like this to children, because they are our future."

"I also really want to do a lot more charity work. The best thing which could come out of my time on The Apprentice, is for a charity to give me

a call and ask for my help. I already work with charities, but it would be great to do more."

For now, though, he's just happy to be back home.

He told KoS: "I love Kent, and am a Kent boy. My wife is from this beautiful county, my daughters were born here, and this is the place I first came when I arrived in the UK from Colombia. Many of the big moments of my life have taken place here and it has given me everything I have. I wouldn't change places ever."

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BRIDGE OF SIGHS: But is free-flow actually working?

Dartford Crossing has 'teething problems' as new plan kicks in

After a long build-up, the much anticipated changes came to the Thames crossing last weekend when the new payment system finally came into force. But is it delivering on its ambitious promises?

By Maria Chiorando

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MOTORING organisation the AA has slammed the changes to the Dartford Crossing payment system Dart Charge, saying users have branded it a 'shambles'.

Dart Charge, which came into force at 6am on November 30, sees motorists paying to use the crossing remotely, either online, by phone or in shops at Payzone terminals.

This should ease congestion, as traffic can flow freely without drivers having to stop and pay at the booths. Overhead cameras will use number plate recognition technology to issue fines to those who have not paid for crossing by midnight the day after making the crossing.

Implementing the system over the weekend did not go without its hiccups though, with tolls being suspended twice and reinstated amid traffic tailbacks that were caused by removing the booths – work that began last Friday.

The toll booths for the north bound tunnels remain in place although they are now unmanned, while they have been removed in the opposite direction.

Luke Bosnet, a spokesman for the AA said: "Some people have been having difficulties finding out how to pay and get through on the phone line, which has been constantly engaged – hopefully that will improve."

"There remain some questions for certain types of road users – the elderly, for example, who may not be as

competent in using the internet, and are having issues getting through on the phone."

"The other group we're concerned about is those on a low income, who may not have credit or debit cards, which means they have to search for a Payzone, which can be tedious."

A spokesman for the Highways Agency told KoS: "There has been a very high volume of calls in the first couple of days, which we would have expected. We are aware people had problems and we apologise, and have put more robust procedures in place to deal with the calls."

"Once people are through, it's very quick – around two minutes to make a payment and about seven to set up an account."

"In terms of people not using the internet, or having access to credit or debit cards, we have many payzone outlets – the same places you can pay for gas and electric meters, you can pay for the crossing. You can even pay in advance by post."

Others have been more positive, with Natalie Chapman, the head of policy at the Freight Transport Association (FTA) saying: "So far, it's been good. There were a few minor teething problems that got sorted out quickly."

"I tested out the crossing myself on Monday morning. When you are crossing south-bound on the bridge, there are immediate benefits. Heading north-bound through the tunnel, I was held for a few minutes while a hazardous load was escorted, but while that used to close all lanes, now it will only take up two out of four lanes."

One issue that has angered motorists

is the hike in charge, which now costs £2.50 (up from £2 before November 30), with the FTA saying they are 'frustrated' at the price increase being put in place before the full benefits of free flow are realised.

The AA's Mr Bosnet added: "It's very crafty how they have increased the price. One of the things our members have commented on is how the agency justify the toll by saying it manages traffic, but it's an orbital route, and many need to use it."

"When the crossing was initially built, it was said that motorists would be charged until it was paid for – it has been paid for, but still they have to grab more money off drivers and

businesses who have little option but to use the route."

"I think it would be better if the Highways Agency said they were charging people in order to raise money for a second crossing – as the economy continues to grow, we need increased capacity for Britain's traffic flow."

Ms Chapman said: "We are looking at traffic at the crossing reaching pre-toll levels by 2020, so we really need to be looking at a lower Thames crossing."

The Highways Agency has claimed that income is in fact earmarked for that very purpose, saying: "The charge for the crossing is decided by policy, which is the responsibility of

the department of transport."

"Putting a toll in place did cut traffic by 17 per cent and the revenue will be used for road projects, will help develop a lower Thames crossing."

Work to fully remove the toll booths from the payment plaza is due to finish by mid-late March next year, which is when the full benefits of the scheme will be felt, though traffic has already eased.

The Highways Agency have said that the work will mainly be carried out overnight in order to reduce disruption.

Motorists are now waiting until spring to see how the full plan will improve the misery of congestion.

YOUR ESSENTIAL DART CHARGE GUIDE

WHILE the benefits of Dart Charge have already been felt by some, others have found the new system to be confusing.

This handy guide answers some most frequently asked questions, and should prepare motorists to use the tolls.

Q. How do I pay remotely?

You can either pay before or after crossing – you have until midnight the day after crossing. If you don't pay before that, you will be issued with a fine.

You can:

Pay online via www.gov.uk/dart-charge

Pay by phone on 0300 300 0120

Pay at one of the 18,000

Payzone retail outlets nationwide.

See www.payzone.co.uk/

Store-Locator for where to find one close to you. But, as a rule, if you can pay the London Congestion Charge, you can pay for Dart Charge too.

Pay by post (for advance payments only) to: PO Box 842, Leeds, LS1 9QF. Call the number above to request a payment form.

Or, alternatively, set up an account.

Q. How does an account work and can anyone apply for one?

If you use the crossing once a year, or every day, an account is the Highways Agency's preferred option. You get a discount, your account is automatically debited, and when you start running low on funds, you can automatically add extra funds so you always

have the cost covered.

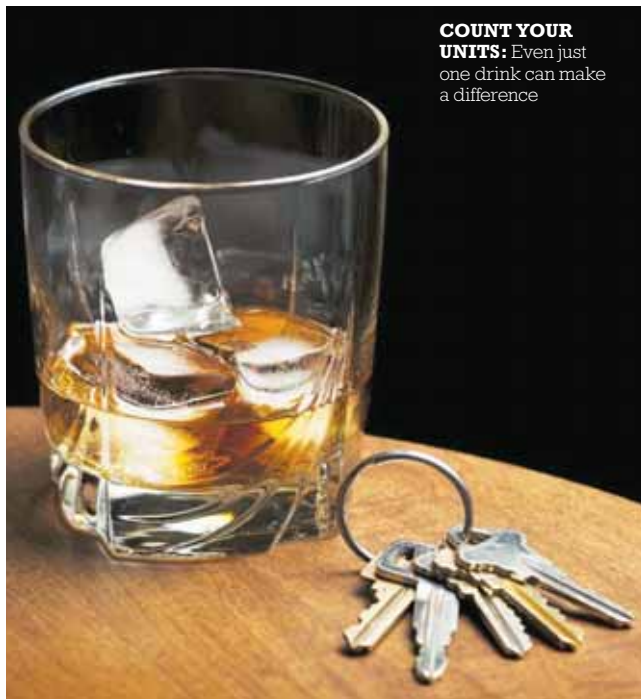
You can set one up either by placing funds into it (a minimum of £10) or by having a direct debit set-up to top it up as and when necessary. If you use an Oyster card think a car version of that.

Q. I own two cars, do I have to set up two accounts?

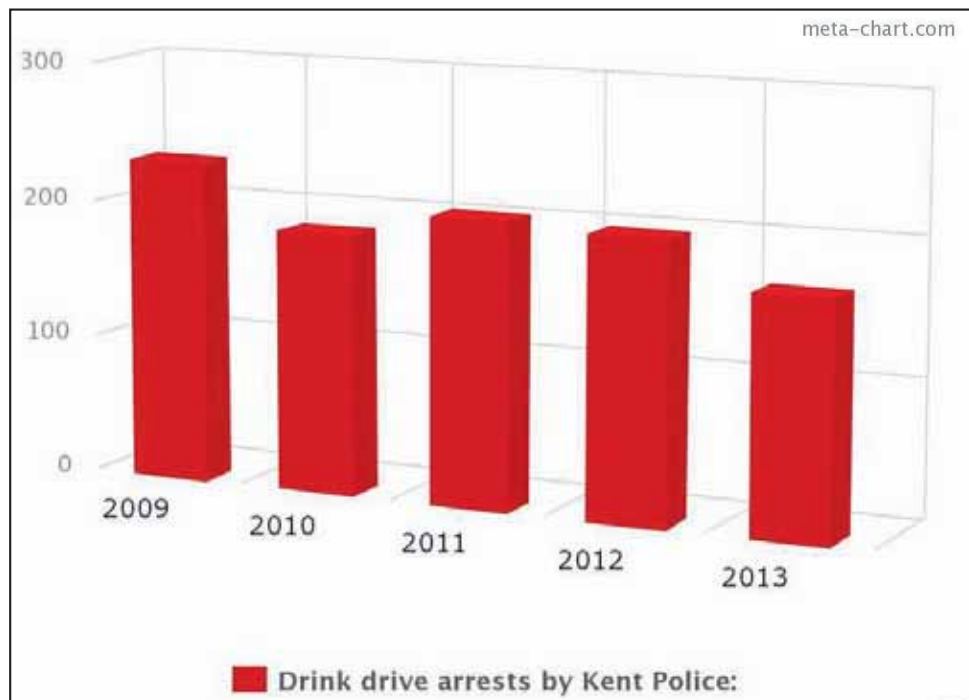
No. You can add a number of cars to the same account.

Q. What if I don't pay or forget?

You'll be sent a penalty charge notice if you don't pay by midnight on the day after your crossing. The penalty charge is £70 and must be paid within 28 days. It's reduced to £35 if you pay within 14 days and increased to £105 if you don't pay. You also have to pay the crossing charge.



COUNT YOUR UNITS: Even just one drink can make a difference



The message from police is clear – Don't drink-drive this Christmas

The festive season often sees a spike in drink-drive related accidents, so Kent County Council will be teaming up with others to try and educate the public about the dangers of getting behind the wheel.

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@googlemail.com

KENT Police will be carrying out targeted spot checks over the festive period in an effort to clamp down on drink driving.

This is part of a winter campaign with Kent County Council, Medway Council and Kent Fire and Rescue service that was launched on December 1.

One in six fatal crashes involves a driver who has been drinking, and even the smallest amount of alcohol in the blood can dangerously affect motor reactions.

A police spokesman told KoS: "We are not trying to catch people out, we are trying to spread the message that if you are not sure whether you should drive, then don't."

"We are reminding people that drink driving is illegal, and we are trying to dissuade people from doing it. We have a duty to enforce the law, and are not ashamed to make arrests if we have reason to believe that someone is breaking the law. We made nine arrests between December 1 and 4, with five of those being charged."

The campaign will be publicised through local media, social media, in pubs and clubs on beer mats and posters, and an advertising van will tour the county's highest footfall areas.

With no accurate measure other than the police breathalyser, the message the campaign is promoting this year is clear: if you are driving, don't drink; if you are drinking, don't drive.

Steve Horton is Kent County Council's (KCC) road safety team leader.

He said: "Drivers must understand that they do not have to be drunk to be dangerous."

"Just one drink can increase the chances of them having a crash, sometimes with tragic consequences for the victims and their families."

"Drivers cannot be sure of the effect drink is having on their reaction times and ability to drive, until it is too late. Even the smallest amount of alcohol will affect their ability to drive safely. My message is simple; if you are driving just consider, is one drink worth it?"

"The penalties on drink drivers can be far reaching. Driving bans and prison sentences can lead to drink drivers losing their jobs, while fines and increased, insurance premiums can have a long-lasting financial effect. Worse, a drink driver can cause a serious crash and change someone's life forever."

"I urge everyone to act responsibly this winter, particularly around Christmas and the New Year."

There appears to be a general downwards trend in drink driving, with numbers of arrests for the offence reducing year by year, with the exception of 2011, which saw a small increase (see graph).

Kent Police said: "Numbers of arrests have fallen from 232 in 2009 to 169 in 2013, and while the trend is positive, 169 is still 169 too many."

"We have reminded our officers of their duties, and that they should be extra vigilant as we know that at Christmas there are more social events going on, and this might put

more people in position where they consider getting behind the wheel when they normally wouldn't."

"We will be running the spot checks in the evenings when people are out, but also in the mornings where people may not realise that they are doing anything dangerous, but are still suffering from the effects of alcohol."

"If you have been drinking, there are no quick fixes to sober up. Drinking coffee, for example, will not get the alcohol out of your system any more quickly."

Mr Horton added: "The advice we'd give about the morning after is to count units when you are drinking."

"For every unit you drink, allocate one hour of recovery time, then add an extra hour. This is how to calculate when you will be alcohol free."

KCC has been running the scheme for many years, and said it was "delighted" to invite the fire service on board at an earlier than usual planning stage this year.

Alexa Kersting-Woods is the road safety and safeguarding manager at Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

She said, "Joining forces with our colleagues across Kent and Medway to highlight such a vital message is crucial at any time of year."

"The aim is to highlight the devastating consequences that can happen if a person decides to drive under the

influence of drink or drugs. Our key message to drivers is simple – Is it worth the risk?"

"There are still people who feel they can gamble with their lives and others' lives by getting behind the wheel. Many believe they know how much the limit is - but the simple fact is there is only one way of being sure that you are safe to drive – don't drink or take drugs at all. Any amount of either in your system affects your ability to drive."

"All too often we attend road crashes that have life-changing impacts on families. Please keep yourself, your family and others safe – not just across the festive period, but always."

DRINK DRIVING: THE STATISTICS

■ OVER the last five winters, 281 people were injured or killed in drink driving related crashes on Kent and Medway's roads.

■ Last winter alone, 89 individuals were killed or seriously injured (KSI) because of drink drivers. One in ten of road deaths involve a drunk driver.

■ Driving with twice the legal limit of alcohol in your blood increases your chances of having a crash by 30. After one drink, the chances of a driver being involved in a crash can double.

■ The effect of alcohol on our bodies varies depending on our

weight, age, gender, metabolism, when we last ate and our current stress level.

■ Driving or attempting to drive whilst above the legal limit or being unfit to drive through drink could lead to six months in prison with a fine of up to £5,000 and disqualification for at least 12 months.

■ If you are convicted twice in ten years then the driving ban could be up to 10 years.

■ Causing death by dangerous driving when under the influence of drink can lead to up to 14 years in prison, with unlimited fines, disqualification from driving for

up to two years and a mandatory extended driving test to regain your licence.

■ After being convicted of drink driving, you could pay up to three times more for car insurance, or not be able to get insured at all.

■ According to statistics from the police, in both 2012 and 2013, the second Friday of December saw the highest number of arrests for drink driving, so patrols will be vigilant on this upcoming Friday.

■ Detailed information about drink driving, including the 'morning after' effect, is available by visiting the dedicated website, www.isonedrinkworthit.co.uk.



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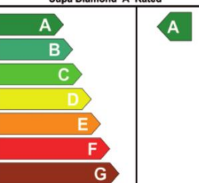
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Muddy waters of paying for flood defences

KCC may take 15 years to match the Government's £17m for flood prevention measures in mid Kent

By **Jamie Weir**

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

MORE than £17 million is to be invested in flood defences for parts of mid Kent left submerged last Christmas.

But it remains unclear whether the required match funding from the county council will be forthcoming anytime soon.

The money is part of a £2.3 billion package of measures unveiled this week by the Government to support communities across the country at risk from flooding.

Trumpeted earlier in the week, it was officially an-

nounced during the chancellor's Autumn Statement.

The funding for the area between Maidstone and Tonbridge, which includes Yalding, follows scenes of devastation last year as heavy rain saw the River Medway burst its banks. Storms saw homes flooded in the early hours of Christmas Eve and left many forced to flee.

However, the £17m was secured after Kent County Council promised to raise an identical sum. But leader Paul Carter this week warned matching the money could take up to 15 years and will be potentially met, in part at least, by tax hikes for those homes and businesses in the affected areas.

And that is likely to cause

grave concern for residents, desperate to ensure no repeat of last winter.

The Conservative council leader said: "The Government's announcement is a direct result of our commitment to work with partners to find 50 per cent of the funding. Without this commitment the government's input would not have been forthcoming.

"In order to enable these schemes to get under way as soon as possible we now have to look at ways of finding this money over the next 10 to 15 years.

"I have always maintained that the match funding needs to be raised partly by means of a precept on houses and also commercial rates in the areas that are most at risk of flood-



FLOODED OUT: MP Helen Grant visits Yalding during the floods

ing. We will also look at a developer contribution from new houses built in area. Extra funds could also be available through our application for a Local Enterprise Partnership Growth Fund.

"Securing the government's contribution is a major step forward and we will do everything we can to make sure that these schemes progress as quickly as possible."

If, and when, the match-funding is secured, it will pay for two key flood defence schemes which have been recommended by the Environment Agency (EA) – the government agency responsible for flood protection.

The existing Leigh barrier – effectively a huge tank designed to store water as the river reaches dangerously high levels thus controlling its flow (see box) – will be increased in size.

In addition, there will be a new overflow area constructed, known as the Lower Bault Storage Area.

MP Helen Grant, Conservative politician for Maidstone and the Weald, has been an active campaigner for more money to protect her constituency.

She convened a 'flood forum' in the aftermath of last year's Christmas floods, working in partnership with residents, key agencies, parish, borough and the county council.

The group of stakeholders formed the forum in February, creating a nine point action plan to tackle the issue of flooding across the Maidstone area and get the defence schemes approved.

The schemes, which Mrs Grant says should help to safeguard the area in Yalding, and also Collier Street, from flooding, were recommended as part of the Environment Agency's (EA)

Middle Medway strategy – a plan to manage water in the River Medway.

Mrs Grant said: "I visited flood affected areas on Boxing Day and the ensuing week and experienced for myself the devastation caused. I resolved to do everything I could to tackle the issue of flooding going forward."

"Our flood-prone communities have been blighted by flooding for many years, so it is absolutely vital that long term solutions, like these, are secured."

"I'm proud our two flood forums and comprehensive nine-point action plan played a part in the secretary of state's decision, demonstrating the power of partnership working."

As part of the project to deliver the scheme, the EA is now working on a detailed modelling and feasibility study to ensure that the scheme can be built effectively. This is due to be completed next year.

An Environment Agency spokesman told KoS they were happy with the announcement.

He said: "The scheme has been designed to reduce the risk of river flooding to Yalding and Tonbridge, and will help reduce the risk to some other communities along the Medway, including Maidstone. We will continue to work with our partners to deliver the scheme as quickly as possible."

Flood defences in Sandwich, Whitstable and the Folkestone area are all set to see improvements too.

The funding will bolster sea defences over a six year period, with a variety of different schemes around the country receiving money.

With one in six properties at risk of flooding, the funding will pay for defences that will safeguard thousands



EXTENSIVE DAMAGE: Water surged through the village of Yalding flooding homes and businesses

of houses across the county according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra).

One of the schemes which is set to ensure our coast is safeguarded is the Broomhill Sands coastal defence

scheme. The £30m project – which will safeguard parts of Shepway's **Turn to Page 16**

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FLOODING: Yalding was one of the worst spots for flooding

coast – is one of those which has received funding in the first two year 'construction' phase. The new government funding means that the flood risk will be reduced for 1,300 houses, covering 2.4 km of beach on the Shepway coast.

Despite the funding, some still aren't happy about the capital investment, stating that more needs to be done to ensure maintenance takes place so floods never happen in the first place.

Christine Drury is the chairman of the rural campaign group, CPRE Kent, the local branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England. She

told KoS that it is essential a longer term approach is made to flood prevention.

She said: "We welcome the recognition that flooding is an issue which needs to be addressed and will closely monitor how effective the flood defence schemes are. We are sceptical as to whether this will be enough as we understand it is not new money and maintenance is as important as capital projects."

And Mrs Drury is also concerned that too much is being made of protecting high population areas of the county, and not enough on the landscape as a whole.

She said: "We ask the Government to ensure that the importance of farmland is recognised also, not just areas of high population, because the economy depends on our agriculture as do the landscapes of Kent and Romney Marsh in particular."

But the Environment Agency chairman, Sir Philip Dille, says that actually, despite the headline number of properties, the flood defence schemes which will be brought in will work to reduce coastal erosion and reduce overall flooding issues in Kent and the rest of the country.

Sir Phillip said: "This first ever

THE LEIGH FLOOD DEFENCES

THE Leigh flood storage area was built in 1982 following the devastating 1968 floods where weather conditions caused rivers to break their banks and widespread flooding.

Its primary purpose is to reduce the risk of flooding to 965 properties and 300 businesses in Tonbridge.

It is formed by a 1.3km-long, five-metre-high earth embankment across the Medway Valley. The River Medway passes through a reinforced concrete control structure built into the embankment.

The three steel radial gates can be moved to either let the river flow normally, or to restrict the flow and hold water in the storage area, to control the amount of water flowing downstream.

The Environment Agency operates it at the peak of a flood event, when river levels passing through the structure are at their highest. However, at times of exceptional rainfall there will still be some flooding downstream, although this will be much less than if the storage

area was not there.

It came under massive scrutiny when facing the wettest December in over 100 years. It led to saturated ground and very responsive rivers.

At 5am on Tuesday, December 24, the storage area was empty and the River Medway was flowing unrestricted in its normal channel.

It was from this time that the Environment Agency started to store water to reduce river flows downstream. By 8pm, the storage area was storing water within 10 millimetres of its maximum limit of 5.5 million cubic metres of water.

It will come as little comfort to those whose homes flooded, but without the storage area, it has been calculated that a peak flow of 300 cubic metres of water per second would have passed through Tonbridge and other downstream communities. The storage area effectively halved the flow downstream.

When the Government's funding is matched, the storage area should be increased by as much as 30 per cent.

long term investment programme will protect over 60,000 properties in Kent, Hampshire and Sussex alone and save the national economy £2.7 billion by 2021.

"The lifetime benefits of this investment will be even higher at over £30 billion. New schemes may also

be added as the programme progresses.

"The investment programme was published alongside a new long term study from the Environment Agency which shows that the planned investment will reduce overall flood and coastal erosion risk in England."



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What price your police service?

– PCC Ann Barnes considers raising council tax

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Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Ann Barnes is posing this key question in what could result in a landmark decision.

In the light of enormous public spending cuts, the police budget has already been dramatically reduced, with £50m shaved from its funding over the recent years and around 500 posts cut.

In practical terms, that means a reduction in frontline officers, big reductions in backroom staff, and officers being unable to attend smaller scale offences.

What's more, after the Chancellor's autumn statement this week, it seems almost inevitable more cuts lie ahead.

Few, if anyone, is happy.

Not the police or, most of all –

“I go to sleep worrying about money... If people want a particular type of service from the police, then there needs to be funding”

Ann Barnes,
Police and Crime Commissioner

Importantly, us as the taxpayer. But there is an option. The question is, will people accept it?

Kent Police receives its funding through Government grants and from each and every council tax payer in the county.

It sets a precept on the overall

council tax we pay. Each bill is primarily made up of a cost to Kent or Medway councils, plus slices to fund your local borough or district authority, the police, Kent Fire & Rescue and, if you have one, your local parish or town council.

The Kent Police slice is, for an average band D house, around the £144 mark. That's about 39p per day for each home.

Mrs Barnes has raised the controversial issue of increasing the police's portion of council tax.

She says this may be the only way to ensure the county's residents retain the same level of policing they have become used to.

With £50m slashed since 2011, according to Barnes another £60m of savings will need to be found over the next four years. That's a fifth

of its total funding. Mrs Barnes believes in the light of such restrictions, the public should be happy to dig a little deeper to bridge the gap.

She told KoS: “I go to sleep worrying about money, and I wake up worrying about money. If people want a particular type of service from the police, then there needs to be funding available.”

“I'm asking people whether they would be willing to pay a little more to keep the same number of police on the street.”

Currently, each organisation which relies on a chunk of its funding from the council tax is restricted by the Government as to

Turn to page 20

THE PROCESS

THE Localism Act, which was brought in by government in 2011, introduced a power for the minister for communities and local government to define a cap for council tax.

That cap is set by the minister each year, allowing councils, and other authorities like the police, or fire services, to raise

their tax rates up to a pre-defined level. Between 2014 and 2015, the minister capped the level at two per cent.

If the service or council wants to raise its levels beyond the pre-defined rate – two per cent – then it is necessary for it to hold a public referendum. The result of the referendum is final. These referendums can be costly for the service or council involved, as if it loses the bid for a greater amount of tax revenue then it has to stump up the cash for holding the referendum.



FUNDING: Are you willing to pay more?

WHAT OTHER AUTHORITIES ARE TRYING

CURRENTLY, no referendum on an increase in council tax levels has been held since the process was first introduced. However, some authorities have come close to trying. Earlier this year, the leader of Brighton and Hove City Council announced that he wanted to hold a referendum on a proposed 4.75 per cent rise in council tax. This plan was quashed during council meetings.

Essex's PCC also tried to increase the council tax precept by 3.5 per cent, first highlighting the plans in January 2014. However, when the two per cent cap was imposed on councils, Nick Alston, the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner, decided to abandon the plans. He said that the risk of a £2 million charge if the Essex PCC failed to win the referendum made it too dangerous to take on. Mr Alston said that, as a result of the cap, the Essex force would face significant financial challenges in the coming years.

Other PCCs have raised their council tax precepts, but none have tried to take their money over the cap yet.

how much it can increase its slice of the pie each year.

In order to protect the public's pocket, that has been capped at just below two per cent each year.

Should anyone wish to up their slice by more, it would spark a referendum. In other words, a vote for the people of Kent to decide whether to accept it.

It has been widely referred to as the 'getting turkeys to vote for Christmas option'. In short, who wants to willingly pay more tax?

But in this era of austerity, it is worth giving some consideration to.

Kent Police's overall budget is funded by around 80 per cent from central government, and 20 per cent from the local taxpayer.

With the Government funding constantly dropping, the funding shortfall may fall into our laps.

Ann Barnes' proposal is to raise the police slice of the council tax by a maximum of 3.5 per cent. It may sound a lot, but it equates to just £5 per household per year. That's about a penny a day extra.

She explains: "My current police and crime plan assumes a two per cent increase in the council tax but this gives us no defence against more cuts. The only way to keep our police officers on our streets is to raise it beyond two per cent, up to a maximum of 3.5 per cent, or £5 per household, per year."

Holding a referendum, however, is a potentially high risk and expensive business. Plus, the service won't improve, it will simply stay at its current level.

The simple administration of holding a referendum runs into the



CUTTING BUDGETS: Home Secretary Theresa May, who is responsible for the police, with PM David Cameron

millions of pounds – the price of failing to have your proposal approved is eye-watering. Lose it and the police has to pick up the tab.

Mrs Barnes added: "The referen-

dum would probably cost around £2m. If we lost it, we would be required to pay that money back which makes it extremely expensive if we don't manage to win it.

"If we waited until the next general election, there is the possibility we would be able to run the referendum alongside it, which would mean that were we to lose it, it

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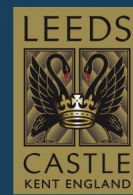
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would cost much less, but it would still be risky, and could still cost us money."

And that is certainly not something which Mrs Barnes, who seems intent on saving money from the force's budget would want to see.

In order to gauge public opinion, Mrs Barnes has run a consultation into the proposals. It finished on Friday.

But, she says, even if the public support a rise in her consultation, there is still no guarantee it will happen.

She told KoS: "If we want to go above the council tax cap, which is imposed by government, then we have to call for a referendum. That would involve asking the people of Kent to give us the green light to charge more. But, for every one per cent we manage to raise in extra council tax revenue, we would be able to keep extra police officers on the street."

Mrs Barnes' proposal is not without its critics though.

Newly-elected Ukup MP for Rochester and Strood, Mark Reckless, doubts the public would stomach such a request for more funds.

He told KoS: "Things are pretty tough for families right now, so there needs to be real caution before any council tax rises take place."

"The police do appear to have borne a greater brunt of cuts than health or education, but even so, I wonder whether there aren't other solutions. I will certainly look forward to seeing the case put forward by the PCC."

One thing which Mr Reckless says is crucial, is for the decision



DOUBTS: Mark Reckless MP

to be taken at a local level.

He said: "This is one of the decisions which must be taken by local people. I would absolutely not want to see government dictate what should happen with any council tax rise."

The Taxpayers' Alliance is an organisation which campaigns for lower taxes, and has, in the past, been a vociferous critic of increases in council tax.

Its director, John O'Connell, said that other, more imaginative solutions should be sought.

Mr O'Connell (pictured right) said: "If the PCC feels the force needs more money, it can cut out waste in other areas and redirect cash towards the police."

"At a time when hard-pressed families are still only feeling a little of the economic recovery, this is not the time to put council

tax up to even higher levels."

Whether or not the PCC decides on a referendum, she says it is clear that a decision needs to be made on policing which will impact the county for years to come.

Mrs Barnes adds: "This is a people-centric service, and what we really need right now is for people to decide what they want from their police service."

Despite a perceived higher threat of crime – despite the county statistically being one of the safest in the country – the number of officers has now fallen to a level last seen since the late 1980s.

She said: "Thirty years ago in Kent, officer numbers were around what they are now. The problem is that these days, there are much, much greater demands on officers with different types of crimes which can be quite labour intensive."

"Cybercrime is a good example of a type of crime which simply didn't exist 30 years ago. Officers now have to deal with that type of offence, but with the same number of personnel as when that crime didn't exist."

"We have already seen around 500 frontline police officers and 1,200 police support staff go, and



we simply haven't been able to replace them as there isn't the funding."

And that, according to Mrs Barnes is the nub of the issue – staff levels will fall if the budget isn't increased.

She said: "We aren't looking for more money to increase policing staff numbers. We have got to the point where we are looking for funding simply to keep what we have."

"Kent Police has already made sig-

nificant savings, and as an organisation which is already this lean, there aren't really any more savings to be made elsewhere. We have got to the point where all that is left is staff salaries – that accounts for around 80 per cent of the force's budget."

The lack of funding, says Mrs Barnes, will eventually impact on the service as police numbers fall.

That is, unless a solution is found.

COMMENT: KENT ON SUNDAY SAYS...

IT seems unlikely many would argue with paying an extra penny a day for such an essential service as the police, but there are other issues at stake here.

For example, there is a broader political issue of whether we should be paying more for a service individually as a result of central Government cut-backs.

In addition, there are fears that should the police seek to raise the council tax then perhaps all component parts would look to do the same too.

Suddenly, that cost could start to rise to a level not quite so easy to dismiss as tiny. After all, the county council and local authorities have all suffered terribly because of the cut-backs. There is a strong argument to say they need additional funds too.

But perhaps the biggest stumbling block is Ann Barnes herself.

There is no doubt, her proposal is basically sound. We want a

strong police force and we want to feel safe in our homes and when out and about. What's more the level she suggests we rise it by would barely harm even those on the tightest of budgets.

What's more, this is exactly the sort of brave step a police and crime commissioner should be making.

Yet Ann Barnes' reputation in the county is currently at an all-time low.

Through a succession of high-profile gaffes and the current on-going investigation into her following a car crash in Dartford, the Kent public has lost patience with her. And not without good reason.

The irony is that having just lost the faith and support of the public, now is the time she looks to endear herself to them and potential win them to vote in her favour.

It's hard to imagine many wouldn't simply relish the prospect of giving her a bloody nose.



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PLANS: As this image shows, the Paramount project promises much



PARK: How site will look

Paramount project edges closer

By Maria Chiorando

maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

Interest in a proposal to build a £2bn theme park and entertainment project continues to grow as 2,000 turn out to examine the latest planning details

MORE than 2,000 people attended the latest round of public consultations into the £2billion London Paramount Resort plans.

The project, which has a licence to use well-known branding from movies emerging from the Paramount studios in the US, is promising to create 27,000 jobs – some 17,000 directly – in a major development to be built on the site of a former cement works on the Swanscombe Peninsula, close to Ebbsfleet.

Comprising a major theme park, entertainment complex and 5,000 hotel rooms, the project will rival Disneyland Paris in

terms of size and number of visitors.

It expects to attract around 15 million visitors a year – an average of around 50,000 visitors of a typical day.

As part of the build-up to planning permission being given, it has to fulfil a host of public consultation requirements. And the latest saw a series of meetings last month in what was the second phase for community engagement process.

Fenlon Dunphy, a director of KEH, which is the main driving force behind the project, said, on behalf of London Paramount: "It was a real pleasure to be able to show everyone that came along to our public consultation events our emerging proposals

for the London Paramount Entertainment Resort. We felt it was important for local residents and key stakeholders to see how the proposals are evolving and the responses received so far have been encouraging and will help us to further develop our proposals."

A dozen events took place, primarily in and around Dartford and Gravesend, but also stretching out as far as Maidstone.

To date, over 750 feedback forms have been received with respondents sharing their views on the draft masterplan, emerging transport proposals and the teams' approach to enhancing the local ecology and environment.

A large majority of people who have responded so far have indicated that they approve of the draft masterplan (83 per cent).

A key part of the proposals is for key new roads to service the site, coming off the existing A2. In addition, it is hoped to utilise the nearby Ebbsfleet International station which will link the site with London and the Continent.

Like the O2 Arena in Greenwich, it is also hoped a key method of transporting people to the park will be via the Thames which borders the site.

Should the project all go to plan, then it is hoped the park will be welcoming its first visitors in Easter, 2020.

The project will be considered under special planning regulations as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). Agreed by the Government, it is hoped the process will speed up the planning process.

As an NSIP, the London Resort Company Holdings (LRCH) management will submit a planning application to the planning inspectorate, a specialist executive agency acting on behalf of the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, rather than the local authority in which the development is located. The minister will then make the final decision.

Further details into the plans: www.londonparamount.info.

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Row brewing over 400 home plan

By Jamie Weir

jamie.weir@archant.co.uk

DEVELOPERS looking to build 400 houses on a greenfield site near Gravesend, have opened a public consultation amid mounting criticism.

The site next to Coldharbour Road – greenfield is previously undeveloped land – was allocated for house building by Gravesham Borough Council in its recent core strategy.

Now two developers – Bovis Homes and Persimmon Homes – are working in partnership to promote the development of the land in Northfleet to the public.

But it has already met with opposition, with countryside campaign group, CPRE Kent, saying the agricultural land should not be developed.

Alex Hills, chairman of the group in Gravesham, said: "The Coldharbour Road development site is currently farm land. At the moment, we import between 40 per cent and 50 per cent of our country's food from abroad. Much of this is from vulnerable sources. Obviously, this situation is not sustainable, so we need to work out how much agricultural land we need – like this development site – and then ensure we protect it.

"The CPRE along with many groups opposed development on this site, despite this strong local opposition the government inspector chose

to impose an unrealistically high housing figure on Gravesham. This high housing figure is not to meet local demand but that of other areas such as London."

However, Mr Hills did say that if the site were to be developed, it would raise serious traffic safety questions – as well as begging the question, 'who would pay' for improvements to be made.

He said: "For the development to happen safely, major work would need to be done on three key roundabouts.

"The changes needed can be done but they will be expensive. That means the question arises of who should pay? Is it right that the county council tax payer should incur the cost of making these roads safe? I think most people will say that is unacceptable.

"CPRE Kent's position is clear; if this development goes ahead, the needs of local people must be taken into account and not just ignored because the inspector said the site should be developed."

A spokesman for the developers said: "There has already been significant consultation by Gravesham council on the potential of this site to provide new homes for the local community. The results of this consultation informed the examination into the core strategy and the allocation of the site.

"We are now progressing towards



DEVELOPMENT: Farmland site is earmarked for the building of hundreds of new homes in Northfleet

the submission of an outline application, which is due to be submitted to the council before the New Year."

Comments are invited prior to the consultation deadline of December 12.

The consultation comes just after a major report published by the coun-

tryside campaign group, in which it stated that there was sufficient brownfield – or previously developed land – available for almost 3,500 new homes to be built in Gravesham.

The campaigners said that this land should be developed first, before

any greenfield land – like the site at Coldharbour Road – should see housebuilding.

For further details on the plans and the proposals, and to take part in the consultation, see www.coldharbour-road.co.uk.

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The forgotten

Richard Lewis looks at the life of Dennis Wheatley, who grew up in Margate and went on to sell millions before fading from limelight

By Richard Lewis
www.richardlewisbooks.co.uk

IF MARGATE had a hall of fame, Dennis Wheatley, one of the biggest-selling and highest-earning fiction writers of the twentieth century, would surely figure prominently in it.

As one of the biggest selling authors between the 1930s and 1960s – he, along with Agatha Christie was the best-selling author during the Second World War, his thrillers captured the imagination of millions.

Among his many creations was Gregory Sallust – a spy deployed in Germany to help crack Hitler's brutal regime.

Such was his impact Ian Fleming would admit the character was a major influence on the creation of James Bond.

Sent from London to a boarding school in Margate in 1905 at the age of eight, Mr Wheatley spent his youngest and most formative years in the town.

Wheatley proudly called himself the modern Dumas and, when he started writing thrillers, openly modelled his band of fictional heroes on the musketeers in Dumas' *The Three Musketeers*, a story he first discovered at school in Margate and which always inspired him.

Mr Wheatley wanted to be a writer from the earliest age, but following in his father's footsteps in the wine and catering business came first and he had to make his way in the world of trade and commerce. It was only after a restaurant supply company he had started in the late 1920s collapsed that he started writing seriously, hoping to get out of debt.

By the 1930s he was dubbed 'public thriller writer number one' and during the 1960s and 1970s became the main purveyor of stories revolving around black magic.

Together with Edgar Wallace and Agatha Christie he was part of a triumvirate that dominated much of the century's popular fiction, with books including spy, crime and Satanist-themed thrillers, historical romances and even board games.

He sold some 50 million books worldwide in his lifetime.

How, then, was the seed for such story-telling success sown at Margate, and why was it that London-boy Mr Wheatley was sent to school in Margate in the first place?

Surprisingly, in view of the tough super heroes he would later create, the young Wheatley was a slight, delicate child whose health gave his parents cause for concern. The family doctor recommended that he should be sent to a boarding school where he would benefit from the sea air.

Margate was chosen, and the school agreed on was Skelsmergh House School, where his Uncle Johnny and cousin Laurie had gone before him. A further reason for choosing Margate was that his paternal grandparents had retired to Westgate and Mr Wheatley could conveniently be parked with them during half-term and summer holidays.

Frail, hating team sports and a fussy eater, he was not a natural for boarding school, but he survived.

Skelsmergh House School itself, with its affiliated senior school nearby, Latham School, formed what was quaintly termed an 'Educational Establishment for the Sons of Gentlemen'. It was run by two brothers, GN and Sam Hester and was the most expensive of the many schools that then existed in Margate.

Skelsmergh was located on the east side of Dal-



UNCHANGED: Former school looks same today

by Square at number 33 in a large Victorian building dating from 1870. It was taken over by the Hesters and named Skelsmergh House School in 1894.

The elegant building still exists at 33 Dalby Square, unchanged in appearance to this day, though now, of course, divided into flats.

All through his life, and especially in his autobiography, *The Time Has Come...* Mr Wheatley recalled his days at Skelsmergh with huge warmth.

GN Hester was head of the junior school and his unorthodox geography classes opened Dennis Wheatley's eyes to the colour and excitement of other countries and the adventure of travel.

He sat completely enthralled as Hester, by way of lessons, recounted his own travels as a young man. He talked about a great variety of things, such as bush rangers in Australia, castles on the Rhine, tea-planting in Ceylon and wine-making in South Africa. In every lesson he conjured up foreign lands and explained, via his own personal experiences, their climates, scenery, people and customs.

No dry population statistics, heights of mountains or lengths of rivers for him, or his pupils. It was sweet music to Mr Wheatley's young, receptive ears and certainly inspired his own later extensive travels and the local colour for his stories set in many different countries.

The budding young author was soon making up stories himself and reading them aloud to his fellow pupils in the dormitory after lights out. His narratives formed a long serial in nightly instalments which he derived from books he had read or had had read to him and which he cobbled together. His story-telling exploits made him popu-

author who inspired James Bond



AUTHOR: Dennis Wheatley was one of biggest authors between 1930 and 1960. Image: Allan Warren.

lar with the other boys, though occasionally got him into trouble with a patrolling teacher.

His grandparents lived in what the author called a mid-Victorian horror of a house, full of irregular protuberances, called Springfield. The large house, in Hengist Road, was a little way outside Westgate and on the way to Birchington, on high ground overlooking the bay and the golf course, a house that still stands today, transformed now into a residential care home.

The author often returned to Margate in later life, for holidays and to meet friends.

Despite his social climbing and upwardly mobile aspirations, he always retained a great affection for the town. In his autobiography he gives an extraordinary account of why Margate never became as fashionable as its smart, upper class cousin, Brighton.

He lays the blame squarely on the local corporation (predecessor of today's district council).

The story Mr Wheatley told is that when Edward, Prince of Wales, had not been feeling well at one time, his doctor advised him to go for a stay in Margate, as he thought its air would benefit him more than Brighton's.

Given that Brighton's rise to fame as the smartest seaside resort was owed first to the Prince Regent and his court and then afterwards to the frequent visits of the said Prince of Wales, this really was Margate's big chance.

A civic reception was laid on for the prince at the station and he was driven in an open car-

riage past the clock tower and up the hill into the centre of the town. But as they reached the crossroads, the horses suddenly took fright and bolted and the carriage crashed into the plate glass window of a draper's shop.

The prince was unhurt, but the shopkeeper wanted compensation and sent his bill to the town corporation. It refused to pay, so the shopkeeper sent his bill direct to the prince. Edward paid, but swore he would never again visit a town so lacking in appreciation of a royal visit.

Something that Mr Wheatley did enjoy about his holiday visits to his grandparents in Westgate was being given an inside view of the more fascinating local places by his grandfather.

One was Quex House, a large manor house in Birchington, the village next to Westgate. There his grandfather knew the head gardener. The author was particularly fascinated to hear about the exploits of the owner, Major Percy Powell-Cotton, who spent his time shooting wild game in Africa and had shipped back many of the animals to create a museum.

Years later, when he was nearly 40, Mr Wheatley met Major Powell-Cotton; he found him so impressive that he always referred to him as Colonel Powell-Cotton. The elderly major showed Mr Wheatley personally around the house and grounds and he immediately determined that Quex House and Quex Park would make a wonderful location for a new story.

The author then went on to write a thriller

about smuggling foreign agitators into Britain, with the headquarters of the smugglers set in Quex.

This book was called Contraband and was fairly typical of Mr Wheatley's thrillers from the 1930s.

Mr Wheatley never had any pretensions to being a literary genius. He knew and readily admitted his limitations. His spelling was poor, his grammar was often suspect and he had no real aptitude for dialogue.

But he could certainly tell a gripping story. His thrillers always contained a strong love interest, which made his books popular with women as well as men.

Anyone who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s will remember him mainly for his occult books, such as *To the Devil a Daughter* and *The Satanist*.

His name became virtually synonymous with black magic, and these novels, with their underlying eroticism, gave a new impetus to his career, making him as popular as ever.

Mr Wheatley died in 1977 and his books today have been all but forgotten. But for all that, he can rightfully take his place in a suspense story writing tradition that stretched from Wilkie Collins to John Buchan, and after him to Ian Fleming and beyond.

■ Richard Lewis is the author of *Artistic Island* & *Artistic Thanet*. www.richardlewisbooks.co.uk.



INSPIRATIONAL: Quex House (top) was the setting for a book featuring Gregory Sallust – inspiration for 007 (below).

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You'll be amazed at our amazing quality and service and value-for-money prices...

Hacker Shaker Display Kitchen

Including Neff Double oven, Siemens 6 Ring Gas Hob, Gutman Cooker Hood, Blanco sink & taps

Was £7599 **Now £2999**



Hacker Cashmere

Including Siemens Single Oven, Siemens Combi Oven, Microwave, Siemens warming Drawer, Neff built under fridge & freezer, Siemens dishwasher, Siemens induction hob, Blanco Sink & Taps

Was £9599 **Now £4499**



Hacker Alanta Walnut

Neff Integrated Fridge, Neff Double Oven, Neff Microwave, Neff Induction Hob, Neff Telespoc Cooker Hood, Blanco Sink & Tap Neff Integrated dishwasher

Was £8999 **Now 4299**



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VIPS: Dignitaries gathered for special service



FAREWELL: Brigadier Chris Claydon addresses congregation



PRAYERS: Padre Colonel Duncan Weaver conducted service

Brigade's final salute

2 (South East) bows out with special service at Dover Castle

A SERVICE to mark the closure of the 2 (South East) Brigade took place at Dover Castle on Thursday. Held at the Garrison Church of St Mary in Castro, it took place as the brigade fell victim to part

of the restructuring of the Army. The brigade, with its headquarters at the Sir John Moore Barracks in Shorncliffe, merges with its neighbouring regional formation to become 11 Infantry Brigade one of the new Adaptable Brigades.

The service and ceremony was attended by lord lieutenants, high sheriffs, generals, chief constables and elected members of county and borough councils. The Chaplain General and the Bishop of Dover made an address.

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Holborough Lakes is an exclusive community in the heart of Kent set around a series of tranquil freshwater lakes and award winning landscaping. On site facilities include a residents' only gym, a day nursery and a diving and watersports academy.

A new high speed rail link is due to start in early 2015, with trains running from Snodland to Central London in just 45 minutes.

For more information please call **01634 776728** or email holborough@berkeleyhomes.co.uk

www.holboroughlakes.co.uk

Sales & Marketing Suite and Showhomes open daily from 10am to 6pm
Holborough Lakes, Manley Boulevard, Kent ME6 5SD



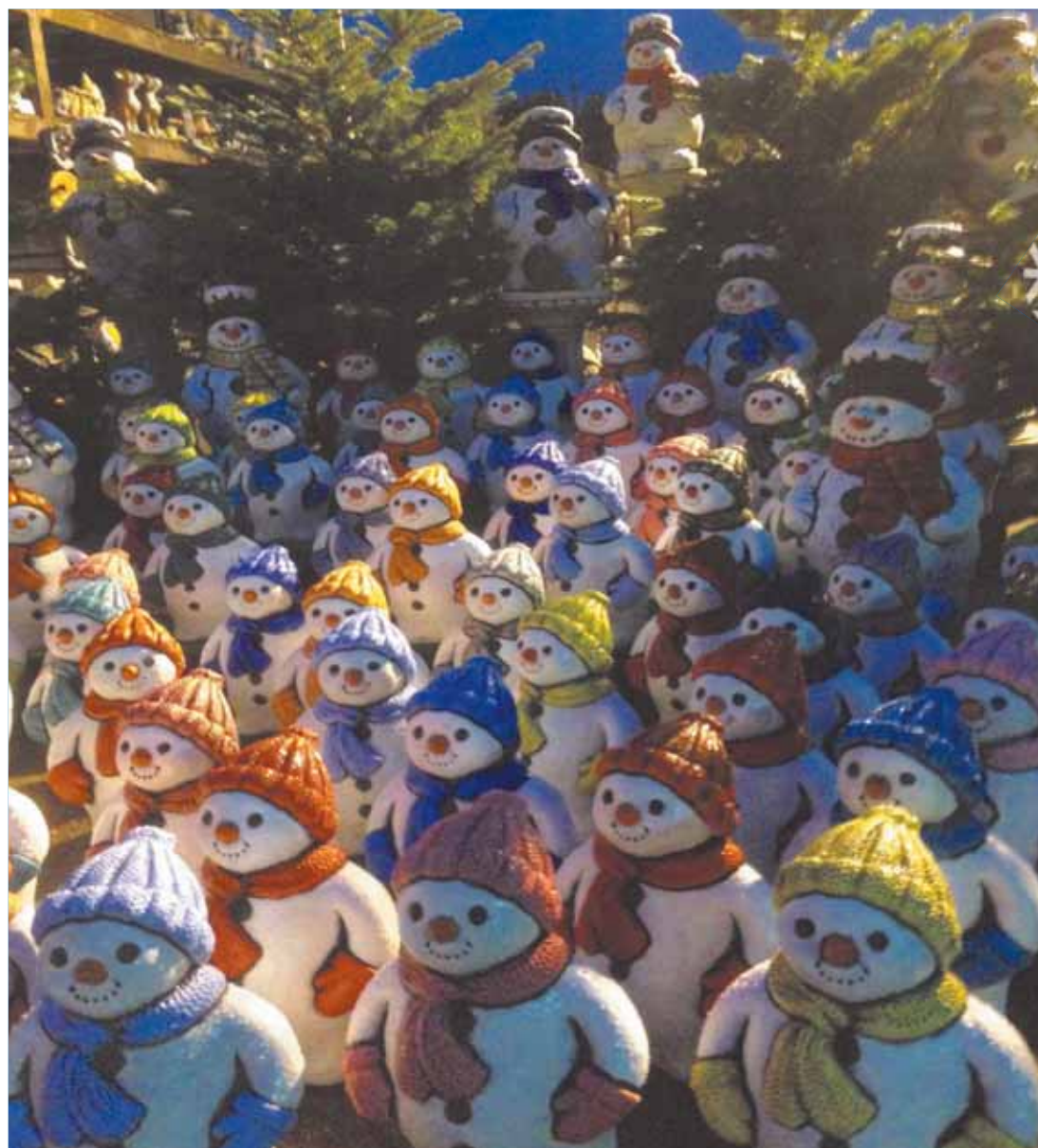
Prices and details correct at time of press. Computer generated image depicts The Boston house type and is indicative only. Photography shows the trim trail and typical interiors at The Herons.



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HITTING THE RIGHT NOTE:
Jodie Prenger and Tom Lister

Calamity Jane saddles up for Dartford performance

Following a sell-out run in Newbury, the Wild West show goes on full UK tour

THE stage adaptation of Oscar-nominated film Calamity Jane comes to Dartford's Orchard Theatre as part of a national UK tour, with performances from January 27 to 31.

The production started its life at the Watermill Theatre in Newbury, where it proved a sell-out success.

Hedda Beeby, artistic and executive director of the Watermill Theatre, said: "It has been such an amazing summer here at the Watermill and to have this wonderful new production of the musical Calamity Jane completely sell out has been fantastic.

"We could have let it play until Christmas!

"All of us here wish the cast, crew and creative team the most wonderful tour of the UK and Ireland and hope the audiences at

every venue take the show to their hearts, just like the audiences here have."

Calamity Jane stars Jodie Prenger in the title role of Calamity Jane, Tom Lister as Wild Bill Hickok, Alex Hammond as Danny and Phoebe Street as Katie Brown.

It tells the story of Calamity Jane, who can outrun and outshoot any man in Deadwood.

Hard, boastful and desperate to impress, she travels to Chicago to recruit a star, Adelaide Adams, for the Deadwood Stage.

But things don't go too smoothly for Calamity, as everyone in town favours the new girl and she struggles to keep her jealousy and pride in check.

It takes her long-standing enemy Wild Bill Hickok to make her see sense, and realise her secret love.

Jodie Prenger is best known for

winning the role of Nancy in Cameron Mackintosh's West End production of Oliver! through the television series I'd Do Anything.

During her run in the show at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, she received both critical and public acclaim for her portrayal of the role.

Tom Lister most recently played Grimes and Eel in the world premiere of Water Babies at Leicester Curve.

He is best known to TV audiences for his role as Carl King in Emmerdale, a part he played for nine years.

Alex Hammond made his professional debut in Taboo at the Brixton Academy. He most recently played the role of Adam Pontipee in the national tour of Seven Brides for Seven Brothers.

Phoebe Street recently appeared in The Light Princess at the National Theatre. Her other credits include Les Miserables at the Queen's Theatre where she made her West End debut.

Calamity Jane is directed by Nikolai Foster, who was recently named as the new artistic director at Curve in Leicester.

His most recent theatre credits include The Witches of Eastwick, Annie and the 20th anniversary production of Jonathan Harvey's Beautiful Thing in the West End.

The show will feature firm audience favourites The Deadwood Stage, Black Hills of Dakota, Just Blew in From the Windy City, Tis Harry I'm Plannin' to Marry and A Secret Love.

For more information, visit orchardtheatre.co.uk or call the ticket office on 01322 220000



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FAEMALE 38, attractive, African, single mum, seeks male, 35-50 for nights out, socialising, friendship and fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412793

SOPHIA young 40yrs, married but bored, seeks discreet adult fun, any area, all calls answered. Tel No: 0905 002 1883 Box No: 413399

PETITE slim blonde 39yrs, pretty big blue eyes, looking for similar easygoing older male to put a spark back into my life, enjoys nights in/out and more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412327

LUCY, 32yrs, blonde lady seeks naughty boys of any age for no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1887 Box No: 413443

WIDOW 70, lonely, seeking gent, 70-75 to bring a bit of sparkle back in life, likes theatre, cinema. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412475

ADVENTUROUS sexy lady, 38yrs, married but seeks no strings fun with discreet man, any age. I'm tall, slim and dominant. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1937 Box No: 415301

KATIE 26yr old pretty slim blue eyed blonde looking for evening entertainment with open-minded discreet guy, any age. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412319

LUCY, broadminded 18yrs seeks discreet fun with men any age. Aca. Tel No: 0905 002 1941 Box No: 365051

JANE 29yr old horsey female, loves the outdoors, cycling, as well as duvet days, WLTm not too serious male for a hopefully normal relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412315

MARILYN really nice curvy tactile female, loves romantic walks, cosy nights in, quality times, looking for nice male to spend time and fall in love with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411871

MARY 5ft 6in size 12 blonde, sexy brunette, mid 20's busty, adventurous broad minded seeks no strings fun. Tel No: 0905 002 1949 Box No: 361739

SEXY 5ft 6in size 12 blonde, nice personality, good conversationalist, interesting, lots of interests WLTm likeminded caring, happy male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412169

SALLY, 38yrs large cuddly lady seeks slim men for discreet meetings. Text Only 4550193

CLARE 39yrs successful single mum, independent, employed with OHAC, size 10, green eyes, pretty, likes swimming, family life, seeking male with similar values and interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412053

TRUDY 36yrs, wltm broadminded men of any age/area for daytime meetings. Text Only 4550194

SHARON 32yrs and still soul searching for Mr Right, I enjoy keeping in shape, caring for people, seeking loving respectful guy who also knows a good time. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412049

SLIM petite, attractive brunette, 56, British/Russian origin, excellent cook/home maker, seeks cultured male for serious relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412129

JENNI, 52 bored housewife wants no strings fun with younger chap. Text Only 4550197

FREYA 31 ft blonde, loves dancing and have a good time, employed, own home, one son, seeking similar laidback guy/dad for dates, chats and more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412045

64YR old lady, seeking male for friendship, companionship, outings and interesting conversation. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411975

JAN 5ft 6ins, dark hair/eyes, nice smile, likes music, travel, countryside, animals, employed, OHAC, looking for companionship with similar lonely heart. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411865

SARAH 25 petite slim attractive blonde student, enjoys keeping fit, looking good, socialising, going out, being a mum WLTm similar fun genuine guy. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411537

JULIE attractive outgoing female with a very young attitude, loves running, living life, travel, WLTm someone special to make my life complete, hope you're out there. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411513

LINDA 37, green eyes, attractive, bubbly size 12, enjoys cosy nights in, text chats, seeking tallish fun guy for meals out, pubs, clubs and spending quality times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411033

CAROLINE 39yr old pretty blonde looking for handsome caring man to put the sparkle back into my life and make each other feel special. Call me. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411891

33YR old sick of being single working mum, OHAC, likes the simple things in life, looking for romantic, honest guy with GSOH for cosy nights in and fun nights out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411887

CINDY 31 attractive, size 12 brown eyed blonde, new to this but sick of passing up potential suit a go. Aca Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411873

RITA divorced care worker with no ties, 5ft 11ins, dark hair, enjoys meals out, cosy nights in, seeking male 45-55 with GSOH and similar interests. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411775

JANET 5ft 8ins, slim 12, pretty, green eyes, brown hair, seeking male companion for friendship hopefully leading to a relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411869

MELANIE tall curvy attractive blonde female who loves meals out, cosy nights in with a nice wine, walking, seeks professional male with outgoing GSOH. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411509

LYN 34yrs, pretty petite dark haired female, loves music, meals out, quiet drinks out, seeking caring male with GSOH who can make me feel special again. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411037

FRANK 54, 5ft 10ins, blue eyes, blond hair, smoker, seeking friendship with mature female, 40-60. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412893

COMPANY Director, mature, late 50's, seeking female, any age for mutually rewarding friendship, Kent/Surrey area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412819

IAN 5ft 11ins, likes rock/roll, singing, making people laugh, seeking someone special. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412799

WRITER tall, slim, dark hair, generous, seeking broadminded lady for fun times. Any age/status. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412749

BLONDE pretty, long legged, voluptuous, blue eyes, seeks male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410585

SUE optimistic divorced lady with OHAC, good job, enjoys meals out, cinema, countryside, pub lunches, looking for likeminded outgoing happy male. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410467

CATHY very much a lady seeks gent up to 62yrs who would appreciate an independent professional sassy female who loves to be wined, dined and romanced. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410301

WOULD you like to bounce into spring with me and onwards? Widow late 60's, enjoy most things in life, looking for someone to enjoy them with. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411395

LADY 60, size 12, easy going, likes animals, seeks male for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411301

SUSAN seeking nice male, medium build, 35, easygoing, likes music, nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 406779

MARIE 37yrs slim attractive caring, likes meals in/out, cinema, tennis, keeping fit/active, WLTm fun loving, reliable man for friendship leading to more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411037

BARRY divorced, 6ft, well built, seeking fun time girl for good times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412717

MALE seeking friendship of mature woman, smoker. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412703

SINGLE young lady, slim-medium build, 24-38 sought by mature male in Canterbury. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405697

MALE 48, looking for fun loving female to enjoy outdoor activities, nights in and meals out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 392212

JAMES young, free and single, please give me a call if interested. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412345

EX headmaster, tall, dark, seeks adventurous lady, status unimportant. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412263

MALE 48, 5ft 10ins, likes cinema, reading, walks, seeks female in the Thant area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412235

BESIDE the Pointe. Literate self-possessing, legless, kindred spirit sought by white male for elevating the bar. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 412223

45YR old male, likes poetry, seeks companion for relationship. Herne Bay area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411993

CHIPS on the pier, walks on the beach/countryside, VGSOH, 58yrs old, fit male, seeks female for laughs and love and whatever. NE Kent. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411725

SOPHIE 27yr old nursing assistant with no ties looking for discreet adult fun times with tall attractive guy 35-42yrs. GSOH essential. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410717

34YR single mum of 1 who loves nights out having a good time seeks similar sociable fun guy to enjoy relaxed but extremely fun relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410709

BUSTY Caribbean lady who loves music, dance and singing, looking for nice older guy for mutual adult no strings fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410305

RACHAEL 36yr old nurse looking to raise the temperature of reliable sincere male. I have my OACH, a single mum to 1, love gym, cosy meals, animals etc. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411045

SUSAN 29 green eyes, dark hair, slim, looking for Mr tall dark and handsome to take me out, enjoy adult times without complications just fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410957

DAVE 65, retired, N/S, likes gardening, music, meals out, holidays, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410971

DAVE 62, 5ft 10ins, slim, semi-retired builder, seeks no strings discreet daytime meets for adult fun. Surrey. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410899

MALE likes outdoor life, smoker, seeking local female for cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410755

BRIAN 70, Maidstone, seeking female, 60 plus, likes meals out, cinema, theatre, days out and cosy nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410611

DEREK 5ft 11ins, slim-medium build, loving, caring, seeking black lady for possible relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410511

EARLY 50's single male, smoker, seeking likeminded female for company and to share life. Must have GSOH, like animals, walks, home made food and nights in. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410441

41YR old male, dark hair, 5ft 11ins, easy going, likes music, guitar, seeking female for friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410411

BROWN eyed white mature, handsome male, seeking black female, 18-50 for discreet no strings adult fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410377

PHIL 6ft, clean shaven, blue eyes, smart, likes sports, walks, films, theatre, music, animals, GSOH, seeks female, 40-55 for fun and friendship, maybe more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410351

RETIRED male, fit, active, seeks no strings discreet meet with female, any age and size. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410343

MALE 5ft 11ins, good-looking, athletic build, looking for discreet fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411477

DEREK seeking female, 50-60 for company, friendship and have fun together. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411433

MALE 49, attractive, fit, spontaneous, good company, no ties, seeking likeminded lady for the road ahead, nights in and out. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411309

RAY 63, 5ft 10ins, slim, semi-retired, seeking no strings discreet meets for adult fun. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411447

WORLD war veteran seeking happy lady with nice conversation in the Kent area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411133

PAUL own business, looking for daytime fun with lady. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 411127

DAVE 65, retired, N/S, likes gardening, music, meals out, holidays, seeks female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410971

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ADVENTUROUS male, mid 50's, seeks similar lady for fun and mutually enjoyable discreet relationship. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410339

CHRIS widower likes DIY, gardening, nights out, rock and roll, N/S, looking for LTR with female. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 410191

RETIRED male, seeks no strings discreet meets with slim-medium build female, any age for adult fun. Dover. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 409533

MALE seeking attractive female for discreet fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 409189

MALE seeking female to love and be loved back. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408941

FIT fellow, full of fun, 58, seeks to find fanciable lady for free and fascinating future for LTR. Find your jar half full. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 405857

CHRIS 52, slim, looking for female, 25-38, slim, 5ft 2ins plus for LTR. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408575

DAVE 50, likes holidays, meals out, socialising, easy going, seeks female 40 plus. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408541

ADAM 48, single dad, bored, seeking fun and more. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408421

DAVE 50, seeks female of similar age for meals out, holidays etc. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408415

RETIRED male, seeks no strings discreet meets with slim-medium build female, any age for adult fun. Medway area. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 408343

MALE 67, professional, fit, 5ft 10ins, medium build, reliable, tactile, likes most things, seeks slim lady, let's go! Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 407855

STEVE 6ft 4ins, OHAC, seeking relationship, outdoor type, homely, wanting mutual good relationship with sexy woman. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 407835

MALE seeking attractive female for discreet fun times. Tel No: 0906 515 7112 Box No: 409189

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Walking in a Kentish winter wonderland

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

AS an antidote to all the indoor entertainment on offer this winter, the National Trust has revealed some of the best places for walks in Kent.

There is a wealth of special guided walks on Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Visitors can enjoy many estate walks around the Churchill family home **Chartwell**, where the shop, tea room, gardens and exhibition are open from 11am-4pm, studio open 12pm-3.30pm between Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Ightham Mote manor house has gardens, an orchard, water features and woodland walks through the Kent countryside.

The ground floor of the house, garden, tea room and shop are open 11am-3pm daily between Boxing Day and December 31, with the garden, tea room and shop open from 10am, and house from 11am. The estate is open dawn to dusk every day.

During winter **Scotney Castle** is transformed with frost and ice settling on the moat, grass



and plants surrounding the ruins of the medieval castle.

Further afield, the estate is home to walks through parkland, woodland and alongside the historic Hop Farm.

The estate is open daily dawn to dusk, with the house, old castle and garden open from 10am-3pm and the shop and tea room open from 10am-3.30pm between Boxing Day and New Year's Day.

Sissinghurst Castle Garden was created by Vita Sackville-West and her husband Harold Nicolson,

and is famous for its garden, which takes much needed rest in winter, but behind the scenes winter tours are available daily between December 26 and January 2 every hour from 11am to 3pm.

It is also possible to meander along the **White Cliffs of Dover** to spot some of the winter visiting birds.

The coastline and car park open from 8am-6pm daily throughout winter. The visitor centre is open 11am-4pm between Boxing Day and New Year's Day.



KNOLE: Take a winter walk
PICTURES: NATIONAL TRUST/JOHN SARGANT

Revel Horwood hooks Pan

DARTFORD'S Orchard Theatre will be hosting Peter Pan until January 3, with Craig Revel Horwood starring as the villainous Captain Hook. Tickets cost £12.50 - £99. Call 01322 220000.



'Let's go for a little walk...'

SHOWADDYWADDY will be celebrating their 40th anniversary with a gig at Margate's Theatre Royal on January 24.

Featuring all of their biggest hits, tickets cost £18.50.

Call the box office on 01843 292795 or visit www.theatreroyalmargate.com.

Slight Return for Morriss

SINGER Mark Morriss, former front man of indie outfit The Bluetones, will play a gig at The Forum in Tunbridge Wells on December 19.

Tickets cost £15, visit www.allgigs.co.uk.



Narnia-theme for grotto

SANTA Claus will be at Penshurst place until December 23.

Children can visit him in his special Narnia-themed grotto, after being greeted by Mr Tumnus and escorted through the snowy woodland.

Tickets cost £9.50 per child (accompanying adult is free). Call 01892 870307.



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Why we should all be making a meal of meat

Tom Parker Bowles explains why quality is so much more important than quantity

Tom Parker Bowles is aware that he could sound like a walking contradiction.

The food writer, and son of Camilla Parker Bowles, knows that writing a book called *Let's Eat Meat* and then encouraging people to eat less of the stuff – but instead spend more on more ethically-produced meat – might sound counter-intuitive.

He also is conscious that with his “privileged background”, it could seem grating when he implores others, from his “ivory food-writer tower”, to pay more for better quality grub.

But when it comes to food, he is not one to be easily deterred.

“You get older and a little bit wiser, and you realise that you don't have to

eat meat every single day,” reasons Parker Bowles, who lives with his wife Sara and their two young children, Lola and Freddy, and is food editor for *Esquire* magazine and writes a weekly food column for *Mail On Sunday*.

“Even if you are eating meat every day, it doesn't have to be a slab of protein in front of you.

I do believe that if you eat a little less meat, it means you can afford to buy better and use more of the cuts that are cheaper.

“The point of this book, if there is any point, is eat meat, love it, worship it, but eat less of it and eat better meat,” he summarises, smiling.

The book includes a meat-free chapter, as well as one which shows how to use meat as a seasoning, and is also packed with recipes where tradi-



MEATY: A dish from the book

tional cuts and offal are the stars.

Mr Parker Bowles, who likes to support British farmers and is strong advocate for having cookery classes in schools, clearly enjoys meat, but the 39-year-old credits his childhood in the countryside for giving him no illusions about “the brutal reality of life – that pigs are killed for meat...”

When it comes to his own career, he is similarly pragmatic.

“There wasn't a moment when I decided to write about food, [it was] just greed,” he says, laughing.

“Greed and being crap at every other job I ever did. I fell into food writing... I had been sacked from every other job, I was rubbish.”

Working as a newspaper food critic is a good fit for Parker Bowles, who readily admit he loves “stuffing his fat

gob at any opportunity”.

As he puts it: “I could string a sentence together, cook and eat. If you want to write about food, you really need to be able to eat, and I've never had a problem with doing that at all.”

He says he generally eats less meat since having children; he and Sara split the family cooking duties at home, so spending time in the kitchen still feels like a pleasure.

And it's clear that while he is a “husband and father first”, he relishes spending time perfecting his recipes.

“For me, happiness is a Saturday in the kitchen with the radio on, just cooking,” he says.

“It relaxes me. I know I talk very fast and have lots of energy, but cooking actually fully relaxes me, it's very cathartic.”

Ye Olde Royal Yuletide

THE Otford and District Historical Society will host a lecture by historian and author Alison Weir at St Bartholomew's in Otford.

She will be joined by expert Tudor and Costume historian Siobhan Clarke.

The lecture, called *A Royal Christmas* will take place on December 13.

For more information, call 01959 524808. Tickets cost £8.

Happy returns to Jane

CLASSIC author Jane Austin's birthday address, entitled *Confessions of a chronic Jane-ite* will be given by Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles this year at St Peter and St Paul's Church in Tonbridge.

Tickets cost £5 and include the lecture, tea and cake. Available from Mr Books in Tonbridge (01732 363000), Tonbridge and Sevenoaks Libraries (03000 413131) and Sevenoaks Bookshop (01732 452055).

Hitting the right notes

MEMBERS of Paddock Wood Choral Society will be celebrating its 35th season with a concert.

The choir will be singing a selection of well-known carols, alongside a major work.

Christmas Cantata explores the Christmas story through the theme of tenderness of a young mother and her child.

Tickets cost £12, or £2 for the under-9s. For information, call 01892 822448.

Chorus of many voices

CANTERBURY Cathedral will be hosting its annual seasonal celebrations – with a host of things to see.

The life-size crib is worth a visit, as is the music sung by the cathedral choir.

There are choir concerts running until December 28 – the Mothers' Union carol service, PWRR carol service, Canterbury Choral concert and the Canterbury Cathedral concert of carols. Call 01227 762862.

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A truly cracking show for the whole family

By Maria Chiorando
maria.chiorando@archant.co.uk

It has been a creatively impressive year for Folkestone, with a successful art Triennial and the appearance of an original Banksy painting in the town.

Now the Folkestone Quarterhouse is continuing with the artsy theme, and presenting a new version of famous story The Nutcracker as its festive show.

It's a Christmas tale, which tells the story of Clara.

She is given a wooden nutcracker in the shape of a handsome prince.

This present leads her and her brother Fritz into a great adventure – the Mouse Queen has stolen the magic of the Christmas tree star and the Land of Make Believe is in danger.

The children and the toys must join battle against the rotten royal rodent to save the magic of Christmas and restore the Prince to the throne.

First though, Clara and Fritz must learn to believe.

The Nutcracker is adapted by Jenifer Toksvig; and co-directed



by Julia Black.

Allegra Galvin, director of Quarterhouse, says: "We couldn't have chosen a better Christmas show to brighten up the festive season in Folkestone and East Kent."

"The response so far has been really encouraging and we are sure that our young friends and their families will thoroughly enjoy this great production that will take them to a magical journey."

Tickets cost £8 for adults, £7 for children.

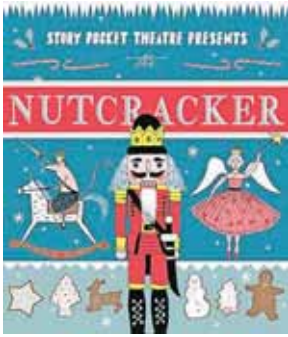
There is also an affordable family ticket for two adults and two children for only £25.

This production is suitable for all ages.

The Nutcracker will be at Folkestone Quarterhouse on December 20, 21, 23 and 24 at 2.30pm every day.

For more information about the show, please visit www.quarterhouse.co.uk.

You can also call the box office on 01303 760750.



WHIMSICAL: Show poster



LEARNING TO BELIEVE: The children and toys join forces

Eat, drink and be merry

THE Queens Hall at the Margate Winter Gardens is holding a Christmas party on December 15, with cocktails on arrival and a four-course meal.

Tickets cost £29.50, for details call 01843 292795



Choir in fine festive voice

MAIDSTONE Choral Union will be warming up their vocal chords for their annual yuletide concert at Maidstone Leisure Centre.

The concert, which takes place on December 13 also features Kent Festival Brass.

Tickets cost between £7 and £16, call 0845 155 2277 for more information.

Magic of days gone by

NOSTALGIC Christmas show Remember When returns to Folkestone's Leas Cliff Hall this month.

Tickets for the show on December 15 cost from £13, call 0844 8713015.



Christmas fit for a king

HEVER Castle in Edenbridge offers a seasonal experience until December 24.

The rooms are decorated with festive adornments, and there are special craft sessions, as well as an interactive nativity and options to buy gifts in the shop.

Ticket prices vary, call 01732 861752.

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DECEMBER		
6th	Best of Faversham Market (Art, Crafts & Food)	Preston Street
7th	Faversham Antiques & Vintage Market	Market Place
14th	Faversham Traditional Christmas Market	Market Place
20th	Santa's Grotto, Big Christmas Market	Alexander Centre 10am - 4pm
	Best of Faversham Market (Art, Crafts & Food)	Preston Street
21st	Santa's Grotto, Big Christmas Market	Alexander Centre 10am - 4pm
	Faversham Traditional Christmas Market	Market Place
23rd	Carols on the Market	Market Place 7pm

French flair on the Canadian piste

TRAVEL REVIEW: Quebec

BY Hannah Stephenson

"WILL we need to speak French?" my 14-year-old daughter

Grace asks on the journey to Mont Tremblant, Quebec's top ski resort. Well, you don't have to parlez Francais in this neck of the woods, but it helps.

We're here for a girls' week of skiing, shopping and spas, arriving at the eastern resort of Mont Tremblant (known as 'Trembling Mountain'), one of the most family-friendly Canadian ski resorts, which is currently celebrating its 75th anniversary.

The French influence is everywhere in this pretty town, whose brightly painted Disney-like buildings form the base to 49 miles of runs.

Only a day's drive north from New York, Tremblant attracts Americans because, to them, it feels like France, without the long, expensive flight. For us, it's a six-and-a-half hour flight from London and 90-minutes by car to the resort, far closer than its bigger competitor Whistler, in the west.

We find apres ski shacks serving not only poutine - a Canadian staple of French fries topped with gravy and curd cheese - but also real French onion soup and Savoyard fare, including raclette and fondue, creme brulee and other Gallic delicacies.

This is a truly cold spot. On our first brilliantly sunny day on the slopes, the temperature is a teeth-chattering -18C and our eyelashes freeze while we're waiting for our instructor.

In February, you don't want any flesh showing at all. Everyone wears full face ski masks or balaclavas under their helmets and goggles.

Mont Tremblant is a blessing for intermediates like us. Half of the runs



SKI, SHOPPING AND SPAS: Quebec has it all - and with a dash of French flair, too

are deemed advanced, but many of the blacks are so well groomed, they're more like European reds. With 95 runs over an elevation of 2,871ft, there's plenty of action for skiers and snowboarders alike, whatever their level.

The other faces are the Versant Soleil (sunny side), which is home to the casino and more lodging, and the Edge, which is good for powder.

Back in the village, we watch little ones try their first 'pizza' slices - used

to be known as snow ploughs' on the slopes in the learning zones, which are well equipped with a magic carpet and plenty of patient instructors.

Meanwhile, older kids looking for excitement can buy an 'Adrenaline Park Pass' to access the 50 rails and jump modules in three parks - helmets are obligatory.

In the evening, there are snowmobile rides for juniors and tubing nearby. There's also 80km of cross country trails, dog sledding and snow shoeing.

To avoid the crowds, we're at the gondola at 7.45am for 'first tracks', a service which allows skiers who want space to jump the crowds and hit the slopes first.

It's here that you can really appreciate this resort, the perfect snow, the views over the pretty village and the magnificent lake.

We catch the early morning sun on the north side and ski down perfectly groomed 'corduroy' snow on empty pistes.

TRAVEL FACTS

Hannah Stephenson was a guest of Quebec Tourism (0800 051 7055; info@quebec-original.com; www.Quebec-Original.com). For more information on Tremblant, visit www.tremblant.com

Air Canada offers return economy flights from London Heathrow to Montreal/Mont-Tremblant (via Montreal) from £522.16/£617.16, including taxes. Visit www.aircanada.com or call 0871 220 1111.

After a few days, our aching muscles are a timely reminder of the need for chill-out time, so we head to Montreal for the second leg of our trip. I'm given a much needed signature massage at the spa of the five-star Hotel Le Crystal, in the downtown district where the shopping can commence.

Grace and I head for Rue Sainte Catherine, shopping hub and home of Canada's famous department stores Ogilvy, Simons and La Baie, the biggest department store in the city.

"Instead of going to church and praying, we go shopping," Celine, our guide, reflects of the city she says was once so religious. "Some people just don't go outside in the winter."

We venture into Montreal's famous underground city from Rue Ste Catherine and find ourselves in a vast 30km network of shops, restaurants, cinemas and businesses.

The lower the floor, the cheaper the shop, according to Celine.

Shopped out and exhausted, we make our way back through the vast underground downtown maze to the hotel, for a swim in the spa pool, before reviewing our purchases. With the great exchange rate, retail therapy never felt so good.

Film Reviews by Damon Smith



St Vincent
(12A, 102 mins) Comedy/Drama/Romance

A MODERN-day Scrooge is moved by the plight of a young boy in Theodore Melfi's touching and frequently uproarious comedy.

There are neither jingling bells nor ghostly visitations in St Vincent

- the only spirits are swigged from a bottle - but Dickens' underlying theme of the redemption of the human spirit rings true in this valentine to Bill Murray.

His irascible old coot might gamble, smoke and drink to excess, and seek physical pleasure in the company of a heavily pregnant Russian prostitute, but we fall head over heels for Murray's virtuoso portrayal and it's a love affair that endures the film's occasional lull or sloppy characterisation.

Writer-director Melfi wrings us dry of laughter and tears in the process. This film is released on December 5.

Rating 8/10

Penguins of Madagascar
(U, 92 mins) Animation/Comedy/Action/Romance

BIRDS of a feather somersault,

karate kick and bicker together in Eric Darnell and Simon J Smith's misfiring computer-animated spin-off from the Madagascar films.

Frenetic and fast-paced, Penguins Of Madagascar initially sketches the back story of the four plucky Antarctic critters with a beak for adventure through the lens of a documentary film crew, who are keen to observe the flightless birds in their treacherous natural habitat, called Europe's Most Wanted and literally blasts the penguins into an outlandish spy caper replete with a menagerie of animal co-stars that should be a merchandiser's dream this Christmas.

Penguins Of Madagascar exhibits a similar lack of invention as the films which gave birth to Skipper, Kowalski, Rico and Private.

Rating 5.5/10



Get Santa
(U, 102 mins) Animation/Comedy/Action/Romance

AFTER the nightmare before Christmas of Nativity 3: Dude, Where's My Donkey?!, it seemed like we were in for tidings of discomfort and joylessness. Thankfully, Christopher Smith's festive fable lifts the gloom with a

predictable yet magical tale of a fractured family, which is reunited by the power of the season.

The writer-director is evidently a huge fan of ET: The Extra-Terrestrial, crafting an uplifting resolution that is strongly reminiscent of ET. The heartwarming scenes and flatulent reindeer make this fun.

Rating 6/10

THE festive season for Christmas trees seems to have jumped a month, as retailers have now been selling real trees for several weeks to the public, despite advice from the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association not to buy a tree earlier than December 1.

Those looking for a real-cut real tree, should be sure to saw around an inch off the base after buying, which will open the pores of the tree, albeit temporarily.

The tree butt must be plunged in a bucket of water immediately after cutting it, so the tree can absorb moisture and the pores don't have a chance to close up again.

When the tree is brought indoors, it should be mounted in a water-holding stand and placed away from direct heat, such as a radiator.

The container must be topped up with water every day.

When buying a tree, Harry Brightwell, secretary of the British Christmas Tree Growers' Association, says: "A fresh tree will have a healthy green appearance with few browning needles. Needles should be flexible and not fall off if you run a branch through your hand."

"Raise the tree a few inches off the ground and drop it on the butt end. Very few green needles should drop off the tree but it is normal for a few inner brown needles to drop off."

Gardeners may opt for container-grown trees, grown in pots from seedling stage, which are able to develop a

good root system and can be planted in the garden afterwards.

However, beware of similar-sounding 'containerised' trees, warns Which? Gardening, the Consumers' Association magazine. These trees are grown in a field then dug up and put into a pot just before sale. They often lose a lot of roots in the process and can look dull and lifeless.

Those keeping a container-grown tree should keep it in the house for no more than two weeks.

If necessary, keep the tree in a sheltered spot outside until it's brought inside, put a saucer under the pot to protect furniture and flooring, or place the pot inside another one without drainage holes.

The tree should be kept in a cool

spot, away from radiators and fires, to prevent the tree from overheating.

It should have some natural daylight. Trees need to be watered regularly – don't let it dry out – but don't leave it sitting in water. Try using ice cubes, which also help to keep the roots cool. To keep the tree growing after the festive season, put it outside initially in a sheltered spot, next to a

house wall for a few weeks, covering it with horticultural fleece if hard frost is forecast, and repot the tree every few years when its roots outgrow the container, replanting it in ericaceous compost mixed with grit for extra drainage, feeding it with a low dose of liquid feed from spring to autumn.

Most importantly, make sure the tree does not dry out.



FIELD OF TREES: These trees will be harvested to supply the Christmas market

Top tips for Christmas tree care

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Thanks for voting for me

I WOULD like to thank everyone who took part in our Rochester and Strood by-election.

More than half of us voted, despite it being dark by 4.30pm, while the election process and count were administered smoothly.

I also hope that Douglas Carswell and I may together have set a precedent that, when an MP wants to switch party, they should ask permission from their boss, the voters.

I do though hope the media attention on Rochester may help us in marketing redevelopment land on Rochester riverside worth tens of millions to local taxpayers.

My own focus was equally on Strood, where we have made people pay attention to our problems with traffic congestion, and the Hoo Peninsula, where protecting Lodge Hill has now become a national environmental cause.

The villages of Cuxton and Halling played a key part in my campaign. We were also able to showcase those parts of Chatham which fall within the Rochester and Strood constituency, as well as parts of Brompton with a Gillingham postcode.

Medway Council also used the count to market the whole of Medway from our impressive facilities at Medway Park. With a declaration some time after 4am, they may be congratulated on eking out every last bit of national media coverage which the by-election afforded.

Mark Reckless MP,
 Rochester & Strood

Three horse race at the election

I NOTE your key seats analysis (KoS, last week) which was an interesting view, however it contained factual errors in regard to Sittingbourne and Sheppey in my view.

In 2010, Derek Wyatt did not stand; the Labour candidate being Angela Harrison. In 2015, Labour are putting forward a much stronger candidate, Guy Nicholson.

In a recent Swale Borough Council by-election, the Conservative vote on Sheppey disintegrated - moving to Ukip which were elected.

These facts would indicate a very close race between Conservatives, Labour and Ukip, with Ukip currently in pole position but with everything to play for at this stage.

Also of note is that Gordon Henderson is not a Tracey Crouch and voters will look much harder in May 2015 at the qualities of the candidates rather than the party they represent.

Leslie Hallybone
 Swale

LETTER OF THE WEEK



Let's not read about the death of libraries

IT MAY be more than a month since Sarah Linney raised in KoS the spectre of Kent's 99 libraries being handed to a trust; but the story has far from gone away.

KCC is continuing to work on this proposal even though residents have not yet been asked for their views on the future of this precious service.

What councillors seem to be forgetting is that there is still great value in all clubbing together to build and maintain facilities from which everyone can benefit.

Past councillors supported by previous generations did that for us. We seem to have ended up with politicians with a negative view of public spending who shun taking collective responsibility for shared public facilities and spaces.

Why do modern day councillors appear almost obsessed with cuts and privatisation?

Kent's network of public libraries is something that residents can take real pride in. Places dedicated to learning and enjoyment are close to every local community, free and open to all whatever their income, age, interest or backgrounds. What a fantastic legacy provided by past generations.

And yet KCC politicians, rather

than being proud custodians of this resource are considering experimenting with its future by handing libraries over to an organisation which won't be accountable to the local electorate.

One of the example trusts on which KCC is basing its plan, the Luton Cultural Trust, has already closed two major libraries and abolished the mobile library service completely disregarding the views of local people.

People across Kent need to remind councillors that libraries have been paid for over many years, they are not theirs to simply give away. None of the councillors put that in their manifestos.

I hope that people across Kent will also say very clearly that they want to keep all libraries open - in small communities and larger towns across the county - linked together as part of an integrated network.

If not, historians looking back in fifty years time will be stunned that such a fantastic community resource was let go by councillors. How could local voters let them do that they will ask.

I hope we won't!

Richard Stainton
 Whitstable

Dartford change is a farce again

DRIVERS interviewed recently didn't have a clue what was happening at the Dartford Crossing and the new method of payment and the 'free flow' tolls (KoS, last week)

One driver that did get an information pamphlet had to ask for it.

Obviously in line with modern methods of 'maximising' profits, they want as few people as possible to know they have a matter of

hours to make the payment, before being fined £70.

The increased charge to £2.50 (an extra 25 per cent after being told years ago it would be free) is obviously to make up the losses from foreign drivers who won't have a clue, or care less, about paying.

The claim they will chase drivers across Europe for £2.50, is surreal and not economically sane.

Just put your heads out of your cars and go Baa, because it's fleeing time again!

Phil Granger,
 West Malling

Fall-out of Equitable Life

OVER the last few months, all the leading Westminster politicians have repeatedly stated how determined they are to protect the savings and income of the less wealthy British citizens.

These statements are incredible when you look into how the last two governments have treated the people who lost most of their savings and pensions as a result of the Equitable Life (EL) disaster.

Just before the last General Election and after ten years of denial, the Government finally accepted that it was responsible for this disaster and came up with a modest settlement.

As most of the affected Equitable Life pensioners were at an advanced age, the majority of the successful candidates at the 2010 election agreed that the settlement should be paid in full as soon as possible.

But when the new Government settled down, only just over 20 per cent of the modest sum promised was paid out.

The recipients got letters stating that times were hard and the taxpayers could not afford any more than that.

It was made clear that no further payments would be made.

Since the year 2000, hundreds of investment companies have gone bust.

In all the other disasters, British citizens have been fully compensated even when the investment was overseas or the company was foreign.

Over 50,000 EL policyholders have died waiting for justice and a further 15 die each day leaving families devastated.

The loss of proper compensation is particularly hard on women dependent on the pension savings of their deceased spouses.

In each Westminster constituency there are between 500 to 1,500 families still waiting for justice.

All over the country EL sufferers have written to their MPs asking for an explanation and in return they all got back long standard letters containing the same denials that were used prior to accepting responsibility.

In each constituency hundreds of sufferers have written to their MP asking for a meeting to explain why the Government changed its mind on this issue.

Given the unseemly circumstances its perhaps not surprising that few such meetings have been granted.

But why is the British Government being so nasty to these elderly citizens when they hand out billions of pounds to Foreign organisations and governments?

JB Heywood,
 Folkestone



Scadbury Estate, near Sidcup by Julie Ackroyd

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Champagne
Check-in

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by Rail • 3 September, 2015

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Note: Attendance by the Queen and Prince Charles not guaranteed



Champagne
Check-in

Zundert Flower Parade & Antwerp

by Rail - afternoon departure - 4 September, 2015

4 days, £389pp • Quote: ZD9-KOS

Come with us on a charming break taking in the spectacular Zundert Flower Parade and Antwerp. The parade is made up of breathtaking displays entirely created by volunteers using dahlias - the largest of its kind in the world. Many of them are animated, giving a truly realistic appearance. The town is also renowned as the birth place of Vincent Van Gogh. Antwerp, Belgium's second biggest city, is our base for this break and is a true architectural wonder.

INCLUDED: Escorted throughout • Champagne Check-in at St Pancras • Return rail travel from London St Pancras (from Ebbsfleet on request) to Antwerp • 3 nights 3 star hotel B&B in Antwerp • Excursion to Zundert Flower Parade • Transfers from station to hotel on arrival and departure

See page 43 >>

**How county
has become a
honeypot for
start-up firms**



See page 46 >>

**Retailers hope
Black Friday is
here to sale as
crowds flock**



BusinessQuarter

By George, he's got it right!

**But concerns continue as
to the long term benefits
for county's smaller firms**

CHANCELLOR George Osborne's annual Autumn Statement has been broadly welcomed by the county's business community. With many pointing to it being a political vote winner, ahead of next May's general election, it appeared designed to support small businesses.

The statement – which the chancellor uses to outline his economic plans for the period until April's budget – had a series of headline grabbing initiatives.

And, according to some of the county's most senior business leaders, it delivered what was necessary.

Jo James, the chief executive at the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, told KoS: "The Chancellor has used the last Autumn Statement before the election to demonstrate that he is listening to and supporting British businesses across the entire country.

"By focusing on key business priorities, such as Britain's broken business rates system and the difficulty of accessing finance for growth, the Chancellor has demonstrated that he is committed to solving problems that hinder the growth aspirations of many firms."

But some say that despite the giveaways, he isn't resolving issues for the county's business community for the future.

Continues over page



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KENT'S HIGH STREETS: The chancellor used his Autumn Statement to give small businesses on the high street a more competitive edge, left, Jo James, right, Alison Parmar

Long term doubts remain for firms

Continued from previous page.

One of the chancellor's big giveaways was for downtrodden high streets in Kent, and elsewhere across the country.

In his speech he announced he would be doubling small business rate relief for another year. The chancellor stated this would mean a £1,500 discount for 500,000 businesses, including shops, pubs and cafes across the country.

But Alison Parmar, the development manager for the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Kent, says this move failed to go far enough.

She told KoS: "The FSB is really pleased about the small business rate relief for the next year. It's great news for many of the businesses that have found it tough to compete in the high street. But, what needs to happen now, is much more work for a long term solution."

"Currently, this is just a short term solution, but it doesn't offer any hope for the future. Businesses don't have any clarity which they need going forward. We will continue to lobby the government for real change to level the playing field."

The chancellor's statement that he would be spearheading a full 'structural review' of business rates was also welcomed.

Ms James said: "Businesses will be pleased that the chancellor has committed the government to a fundamental review of business rates. This

iniquitous tax is sapping good companies' strength year after year, long before they make a single penny in profits.

"The review must deliver fundamental change to the business rates system. Tinkering at the edges is simply not acceptable when good companies have to scale back their growth ambitions because of out of control rates bills."

And that's also the FSB's view on

'CURRENTLY, THIS IS JUST A SHORT TERM SOLUTION, BUT IT DOESN'T OFFER ANY HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.'

- ALISON PARMAR OF THE FSB

the review. Mrs Parmar said: "Most of our members tell us that this is one of the biggest expenses for them. The cost of these regressive rates keeps them from employing more workers, and also from growing."

"That's not the way to get the economy working properly, and it isn't a good environment to nurture business."

She told KoS that businesses needed clarity going forward.

She said: "The system is opaque, complicated and difficult. We want a full reform of these unpopular rates, rather than any quick fixes from gov-

ernment, which won't help over the longer term."

This is something which has been backed by the British Property Federation, which campaigns for those involved in property ownership and investment, it state the rates, as they are, currently make no sense.

Liz Peace, chief executive of the BPF, said: "We need a system that is more responsive, both to changes in the economy and to the relative position different businesses find themselves in."

"The compounding effect of annual RPI increases is also meaning that a higher proportion of taxation each year is coming from business rates, sucking the blood from our high streets and eroding many other businesses' competitive edge."

But it wasn't just small business getting a boost during the chancellor's Autumn Statement. He also announced measures to give shale gas extraction a boost, saying that it should be part of the long term energy solution.

Ms James told KoS: "The UK must maximise its shale gas resources to ensure future energy security, economic growth and create employment opportunities. The government is right to explore measures that help to ensure communities benefit from shale gas extraction."

"Our Autumn Statement submission called for measures to ensure shale gas is part of a long term energy security strategy."

MyFerryLink still fighting to continue its crossings

Decision on its latest appeal due this month

THE cross-channel rail operator, Eurotunnel, was banned from operating its ferry service, MyFerryLink, in June this year.

Since then a vicious war of words has erupted, sparking a MyFerryLink spokesman to brand the ruling 'illogical' when speaking to KoS.

The spokesman told KoS that far from helping competition on the route, the ruling would actually decrease the offering for cross-channel travellers.

He said: "The company want to make sure it complies with all rulings, but this one is nonsense. We want the best for customers, but cannot see how removing one of the operators from the field of competition makes any sense. All it does is remove choice for travellers who are using a ferry service."

"We went through a similar process with the French market authority, and their ruling was fair, so we were really shocked when the British ruling came through."

The ruling, from the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA), stated that the company's ferry operations must end within six months of the judgement.

The reason given was that the ferry service, when combined with Eurotunnel's rail operations, meant that the group controlled too great a proportion of the market if one of the other operators were to fail. At the

time, two other Dover to Calais ferry service operators were said to be taking losses on the route.

On November 24 and 25, MyFerryLink took the decision to the Competition Appeal Tribunal – a specialist judicial body which decides cases involving competition issues.

The appeal stopped the clock on winding down the company, allowing MyFerryLink to continue its operations as normal. In fact, if you want to purchase tickets six months ahead, you still can.

The spokesman explained to KoS: "As things stand at the moment, we are fully operational. We are still selling tickets because we can't just stop when there is the possibility we will be allowed to continue the business."

And the economic impact of the ferry operator closing would be significant with between 500 and 600 people who work on MyFerryLink's boats potential left out of work.

But even with a loss, the company wouldn't need to instantly shut its doors on the route.

There would be a six month period of grace in which it could wind down its affairs, and decide what to do with its fleet of boats.

With that extension when the decision comes – it's due to be announced before Christmas – and appeals still possible even when it is given, the MyFerryLink story may not be quite over just yet.



AWARDS: A number of businesses were praised for workplace safety

Setting the bar for safety

AROUND eighty people from SMEs attended the annual H and K Safety Services Limited seminar in November. The industry awards were supported by the HSE, which presented trophies for good health and safety practice and other initiatives. WW Martin, Ash Contracting, DCB

Limited, South Eastern Carpentry, Wealden Homes, Cape Construction and N C Williams were all winners, with individual accolades also presented. Kay Martin collected the first ever corporate social responsibility award for Pentland Homes for its environmental initiatives with schools.

Kent wine sparkles in city

AWARD winning winery Chapel Down has announced its new partnership with St Pancras Renaissance Hotel with the release of the most expensive bottle of English sparkling wine ever.

The impressive Nebuchadnezzar bottle – which is priced at £5,000 –

contains 15 litres of Chapel Down's Blanc de Blancs 2008.

That's the equivalent of 20 bottles or 120 glasses.

Frazer Thompson, CEO of Chapel Down, commented: "We are thrilled to be celebrating our collaboration with St Pancras Renaissance Hotel."

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www.kentinvictachamber.co.uk

Is Kent becoming UK capital for new business start-up's?

The benefits of London, but none of the drawbacks, Kent is attracting start-ups, and with a new hub open at Discovery Park, KoS asks, are we becoming the UK's start-up capital?

START-UP hubs are on the rise in Kent, with many small businesses choosing to locate in the area because of the benefits offered with few of the drawbacks of being in central London.

As property prices in the capital have soared, so have the prices of rents. Some parts of London's trendy West End are now attracting office rents which are the highest in the world. This has meant that many start-up businesses are shunning the capital in favour of cheaper areas which surround London.

Discovery Park – the former Pfizer research site, and now a business park – opened a hub for start-up businesses on its site in November.

The idea behind the new hub at the park in Sandwich, is to provide budding entrepreneurs and fledgling companies with affordable office work space.

The hub offers start-ups a range of office spaces, from simple desk space, to a bank of desks as well as one and two person private offices. And with prices from as little as £150 per month, the park is looking to attract London start-ups which can't afford the capital's prices.

Anna Stone, the leasing manager at the park, told KoS why the park had chosen to offer space specifically to start ups.

She said: "Kent has become a great place for start-ups in the UK, with all the benefits of being on the doorstep of London, but none of the costs. Obviously the living costs are much lower, and the employment costs are also lower. Start-ups in Kent don't have to pay London salaries, but they are still within easy reach of London. That makes a significant saving for them.

"One of the great things for start-ups at Discovery Park is that they have access to a business network that allows them to connect with other organisations. That has already led a couple of start-ups we have at the park getting business opportunities."

And that isn't the only reason for businesses – whether start-up or established – to want to start out at Discovery Park. The site was designated an enterprise zone. This means that businesses which set up there can get



DISCOVERY PARK: Has just opened a new 'start-up hub' for fledgling companies

tax relief and other benefits.

Miss Stone told KoS that made it a very attractive place for start-up companies.

She said: "The enterprise zone status which Discovery Park has gives it

another edge for companies which are getting set up. It helps them do business with lower costs, making them that little bit leaner straight away. That's great news when you first set out as a business and al-

lows them to compete more easily.

One of the reasons for companies to choose Kent to kick off their businesses in is its connectivity to London, and other areas of the world. High speed rail has played an important



part in attracting start-ups, which would otherwise have chosen to base themselves in London.

One of these start-ups is Ultima Apps, a tech company which builds applications for mobile phones. Its CEO, Tony Jones, said that locating in Canterbury was a simple choice.

He said: "Kent's the perfect place for a start up these days. The thing that just makes sense is that it's so close to London, so getting there is unbelievably quick. We have great transport links which enable us to get to St Pancras within an hour on the high speed train service, and also easy access to the continent with Eurostar. It makes a lot of sense doing business from Kent, because you save so much on travel, and saving money is a key concern when starting out."

And competitive financing is also available in the county, with Expansion East Kent loans from the regional growth fund, as well as initiatives such as the Marsh Millions, to help fledgling businesses get started.

Jacqui Ward is the Expansion East Kent programme manager at Kent County Council.

She told KoS that offering attractive financing schemes has helped business grow throughout Kent, drawing in start-ups that may otherwise, have chosen to locate elsewhere.

She said: "Since 2011 Kent County Council has helped 170 businesses across the county and beyond to expand, grow and start up.

"So far 1147 jobs have been created and safeguarded but this figure will grow as more than 5100 jobs will be created or safeguarded by the beginning of 2016. More than £48 million of recyclable Regional Growth Fund loans have been committed and invested in companies to encourage the Kent economy to thrive and grow.

"We continue to support businesses through the recyclable funds and by offering expert advice and guidance to anyone who approaches us for help or funding."

"There are still loans available in the Expansion East Kent scheme, and the Small Business Boost and Marsh Boost funds offer loans of up to £50,000 to businesses wishing to start up, expand or create jobs."

BusinessQuarter | Profiles

Get the best start

WITH the New Year fast approaching now could be the time to consider moving home.

Whether you are a first time buyer taking your first steps onto the property ladder or a homeowner, there are plenty of decisions that need to be made. These range from the type of property and mortgage to hunt out, to obtaining the best legal advice for your situation.

With so many different types of properties on the market and so many options it can be a daunting and complicated process.

However, moving home does not have to be so complicated, provided you ensure that you are well informed throughout the process, and fully understand the property that is going to become your new home.

This includes getting the best advice you can. This includes a survey, which can highlight any potential issues there may be with the physical state of the property.

Receiving expert legal advice is also essential so that you fully understand your legal obligations. At Girlings Solicitors, we are highly experienced, giving you expert advice whatever home you are buying and however you intend to fund it.

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MOVING HOME: Take the stress out of the move with the best possible legal advice

that you can arrive on completion day, keys in hand, ready to move into your new home, knowing that you have made the right decision and are now living in the perfect property for you. Girlings Solicitors will make your move easier, taking the burden from you and allowing you to enjoy your new home.

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KENT-BASED company, Holiday Extras is the UK's number one for pre-booked airport hotels and airport parking, making bookings for over seven million travellers each year.

Established in 1983, the company has been listed eight times in The Sunday Times 100 Best Companies to Work For, reaching number 10 on the list in 2014.

As the business is constantly growing, so is the demand for talented people to join the team. The company is currently looking for software engineers, web developers and business analysts.

Holiday Extras' office, at Newingreen, is a hive of activity every day. To maintain the work-life balance for all employees, the company offers an innovative 'anywhere, anytime' flexible working option alongside plenty of fun events. The



HOLIDAY EXTRAS: The award-winning employer is looking for fresh talent

team mission at Holiday Extras is to make travel easy for customers by offering a wide choice of holiday add-ons – including UK airport parking, airport hotels, airport lounges and holiday insurance via a network of partners including Thomas Cook, the AA and British Airways, and with its own website www.holidayextras.co.uk.

One of the keys to Holiday Extras' success as an employer is that many managers have started out in the company's contact centre and have gained a good all-round understanding

of the business – 23 out of 34 senior managers were promoted from within.

Personal development opportunities range from workshops and coaching clinics, to book clubs and German lessons and the company has its own on-campus academy.

Other benefits include incentives for recommending successful new talent and a quarterly share of the profits.

For more information about careers at Holiday Extras please visit: <http://join.holidayextras.co.uk>

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Ukip is fighting to defend UK's borders from entry by immigrants and traffickers



UKIP: Janice Atkinson is fighting for freedom from Europe

LIKE you I was appalled that the European Arrest Warrant was used to arrest the parents of little Aysha King.

His parents had done nothing wrong other than move their little boy to a Spanish hospital as they didn't believe that the UK could offer the treatment he needed. Instead of caring and supporting him whilst in a foreign hospital, Mrs and Mrs King were arrested and incarcerated in a Spanish jail at the behest of Hampshire Police and the Home Secretary.

I immediately called for his release, not as a politician but as a mother. I was about to jump on a plane to Spain when we heard the news that they were released. This is an abuse of the EU, the Home Secretary and the police's powers; the unintended consequences of a device that has no place in the British justice system.

Yet, our government fully backs its use. We are the country of *haebus corpus*, of *Magna Carta*, our rights are ours because we were born with them, not conferred upon us by a foreign system. Ukip urges the

government to think again.

With regard to immigration and Calais, I am the only UK politician to have met the deputy mayor of Calais and a number of migrants.

My conclusion was that the borders across Europe are porous, allowing people traffickers to ply their pernicious trade.

The deputy mayor agreed that the migrants should be sent back to their countries as they are not asylum seekers but economic migrants. Having spoken to quite a number they confirmed that their destination was always the UK and that they were not asylum seekers.

David Cameron offered the mayor our redundant NATO conference barriers but the mayor said he was at a loss what to do with them.

Mr Cameron had also offered £12 million pounds of British taxpayers' money but the mayor hadn't seen a penny. Instead, the money will be given to President Hollande, which will go straight into his economic black hole deficit, rather than the frontline at Calais.

On the way home, I also witnessed the sniffer dogs at the lorry park. That morning, before noon, one of the dogs had found 14 migrants.

I asked what they did with the migrants once they were found. The handler replied, 'we pop them back over the fence, but they will be back'. It is time to shore up our borders by increasing our overworked UK Border Agency staff, firstly by giving our ex-servicemen and women jobs on the frontline, they'll protect our country.

This isn't just about defending our own interests and borders as we should, it is also about taking the fight to the perpetrators of the vile trade in human trafficking.

The illegal immigrants I met in Calais are also victims – of the lies about the 'eldorado' they think they'd meet in Britain, and the ruthlessness of traffickers who strip their savings on false promises and risk their lives for illicit profits.

We can't end this appalling trade without making illegal entry difficult enough to put the criminal networks responsible out of business for good.



Janice Atkinson MEP
Member of the EFDD Group
European Parliament December 2014
**November Strasbourg Update from
Janice Atkinson MEP**

The European Arrest Warrant is becoming a reality, making British citizens vulnerable to the arrest across Europe without the protections of British justice as before. This should never have been allowed to happen and we will continue to oppose foreign justice for our constituents.

The crisis of illegal immigration across the Channel from Calais continues to deepen. I was the first British politician in direct talks with officials in Calais itself seeking action to stem the flow and the trade in human misery that is human trafficking, and I continue to press case to proper border management at the EU Committee responsible.

The biggest problem across the EU is freedom of movement which allows porous borders with no proper checks on who is entering and leaving, allowing migrants from outside the EU to enter illegally and thus get easy access to Britain.

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Black Friday's cut-price offers grabbed by county's bargain-hungry shoppers

BLACK Friday was a success for many of the county's retailers, with research firm, Mintel, forecasting the frenzy will add sales growth of between 80 and 100 per cent compared with last year's sales of £100 million.

And Kent has seen a benefit too, with bosses at Bluewater Shopping Centre saying that they experienced an exceptional weekend, as record-breaking crowds flocked to the centre to bag bargains.

Footfall at the Greenhithe complex was up by 30 per cent, compared with last year.

Bluewater's general manager Robert Goodman said: "This has been an exceptional weekend for Bluewater and our retailers. Footfall and sales were very strong throughout the weekend, with promotions from retailers across the spectrum. Our visitors have used the weekend to kick start their Christmas shopping in earnest, with incentives across a wide range of products."

Despite this, the day isn't simply for giant retailers, with Barsleys Department Store in Paddock Wood seeing a



BLACK FRIDAY: Here to stay, but how much benefit does it bring?

benefit to taking part. Alice Barsley is a director at the shop.

She told KoS: "We saw a big uplift in footfall through the shop, with more people coming and a greater desire to spend. We took more money

than we normally would, so I think Black Friday was definitely a success for us."

However, despite the boost for both Bluewater and Barsleys, Mintel says that actually, the day may not benefit



SALES SEEN IN CONTEXT: John Mercer retail analyst

shops as much as it seems – this, it says, is because shoppers simply change their habits.

European retail analyst, John Mercer, said: "The event needs to be seen in context. A considerable amount of Black Friday spending will be Christmas shopping pulled forward into late November, and shopper participation remains relatively low.

"Just 15 per cent of consumers told us they took advantage of pre-Christmas promotions last year."

And, according to Mr Mercer, much of the activity takes place away from the high street.

He said: "Two themes are emerging in the UK. Black Friday is focused on electricals and it appears to be strongest online, although the latter is in part a function of the former, given the high proportion of electricals spend that goes online."

Despite this, Ms Barsley says that Black Friday is something her store intends to take part in next year.

She told KoS: "There is definitely a case to take part, regardless of the size of business. Even smaller retailers can compete and I think that Black Friday definitely has a future in Kent."

"We saw a real benefit to taking part, and I think that is only likely to grow in the future."

"Retailers need to change to reflect the customers needs, and we have done that with our Black Friday sales."



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One question commonly asked by people new to the buy-to-let business is whether to buy property in their own name or through a limited company. Unfortunately, there is no simple answer to this question and the choice will ultimately depend on a number of factors, such as how long the property investment is planned to last and any potential tax savings.

As a rule of thumb, if you are looking to build up a large portfolio for the longer term, then a company may be the answer for you – otherwise it's probably best to retain personal ownership. It is important to consider your long-term strategy at the outset because once you've started to build a personally owned portfolio, the tax advantages of using a company may be severely restricted for those properties.

If you already own properties privately, transferring them into your new limited company would be treated as a sale, making you liable to Capital Gains Tax, and Stamp Duty Land Tax would be payable on the transfer. Therefore, it is generally advisable to retain existing properties in personal ownership and put cash into the company, which can then be used to buy new properties.

Deciding on the best option for you can be difficult, and advice should be sought based on your specific circumstances.

DSH is on hand to help and advise you, so contact us today on

01622 690666

for an informal chat.

DSH





How will the new pension rules affect you?

It's essential that you regularly review all your retirement plans, to make sure you know what you'll get when you retire.

If you don't, you could be:

- Paying more charges than you need to
- Investing in funds that don't suit your goals or attitude to risk
- Paying less than you need to fund your retirement, as it's difficult to work out what you'll get if your pensions are paid from several pots

It's never too late to consolidate your pensions and be able to make better plans for your retirement.

Find out how the new pension rules can benefit you, if planned correctly. Speak to our pension and investment specialist Ryan Rispoli.

Call Ryan on 01634 713707

Email: ryan.rispoli@charlesderby.com

Website: www.charlesderbywm.com



The value of the investment can go down as well as up and you may not get back as much as you put in.

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By Steve Loader
editorial@kosmedia.co.uk

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HYUNDAI'S SHOWROOM STARS: the i20 (above and left), the i10 city car (right) and i30 family hatchback (below).



New i20 underlines the revolution at Hyundai

THERE is very little conservative 'evolution rather than revolution' about a new generation Hyundai – quite the opposite, if the latest i20 supermini is anything to go by.

When the Korean brand launched its original i20 five years ago – one of the first 'i' series cars, designed in Europe to European tastes – it was a big advance over its predecessor, the Getz.

In January, the second generation i20 arrives – note the short five-year production lifespan – marking another major leap from the previous car.

Priced from £10,695, sharper styling masks what is claimed to be the biggest cabin in class, seating five in comfort and made possible by a 2,570mm wheelbase – 45mm longer than before.

It has the biggest boot in class too, at 326 litres.

It will also be the first supermini to offer a full panoramic sunroof with tilt/slide opening, while CO2 emissions from 84g/km will make it one of the most eco-friendly.

It joins a range that gets stronger and stronger, including the elegant i40 Tourer with its lifestyle estate lines and company car user chooser tax efficiencies.

The classy Sante Fe SUV oozes quality and looks imposing on the road, while another suc-



cess story is the ix35 SUV, which arrived in 2010 and quickly erased memories of its underwhelming predecessor, the Tucson.

The brand also has a powerful contender in the family hatchback or VW Golf segment: two generations of the i30 three and five-door hatch-

back and its Tourer estate spin-off have been the engine of Hyundai's upmarket ambitions.

The i10 is good looking, capacious and sophisticated for a small five-door hatchback, with a good range of power and an attractive starting price £8,595.

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13 63 Plate Vauxhall Corsa 1.4i SRi Hatch



Representative Example

48 Monthly Payments	Deposit	Cash Price
£187.50	£0	£9,000
Amount of Credit	Total Amount Payable	0% APR
£9,000	£9,000	

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13 13 Vauxhall Insignia 2.0 CDTi Tech Line NAV
13,000 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£13,480**



12 62 Vauxhall Insignia 2.0 CDTi SRi
12,377 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£13,000**



14 14 Vauxhall Corsa 1.4i SE Hatch
12,996 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£9,480**



13 63 Vauxhall Corsa 1.4 Energy Air Con,
1,411 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£7,900**



13 13 Vauxhall Corsa 1.2i Energy Hatch
8,596 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£7,660**



12 12 Vauxhall Corsa 1.2i Active Hatch
14,557 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£7,480**



13 13 Vauxhall Astra GTC 1.4i Sport
8,700 Miles AVAILABLE WITH INTEREST FREE CREDIT **£11,300**



13 63 Vauxhall Astra 1.6i VVT SRi Hatch
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13 63 Vauxhall Astra 1.6i VVT SE Hatch
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Cars shown for illustration purposes only. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. You will not own the vehicle until all payments are made. 18s and over. Guarantee / indemnity may be required.

Premium but offering a different way

The Q50 from Infiniti – Nissan's luxury arm – offers a different path from those well-worn ones to German premium showrooms...

If you buy clothes with brands and logos that shout what you are worth rather than your individual sense of style, please ignore the Q50 from Nissan premium brand, Infiniti.

You just won't like it: it's not German, it's not all straight lines, and the key fob might simply go unnoticed even if you rest it ostentatiously on a bar.

However, if you like charting your own course, admire things that are well made and applaud a stand against adversity, then the Infiniti is worth a second look.

The brand's arrival here in 2008, was poorly timed, with the recession in full swing. Slowly though, Infiniti has demanded attention through well-produced good value cars with points of difference, and by adding diesels. The dealer network is also expanding – recently joined by Infiniti Maidstone, part of the Motorline group.

Our BMW 3 Series rivalling Q50 test car is a technical tour de force, the £41,640 3.5-litre Hybrid All-Wheel Drive model - 302bhp comes from a V6 petrol engine and 67bhp from the car's electric motor.

At one extreme, this lavish set-up



allows rear-driven emissions-free electric mode for a limited time or potent 0-62mph in 5.4 seconds sporting saloon performance, through harnessing both power-plants and driving all four wheels.

While impressive and potentially economical – it offers 41.5mpg on the official combined cycle - the car is

slightly off the pace dynamically, with the 'fly-by-wire' power steering fitted on top Q50 models like this lacking the feedback that keen drivers demand.

However, the Q50 Hybrid is a refined motorway and long distance cruiser that can bind the loyalties of those already drawn to its arresting



and bold styling.

And the cabin has quality writ large, with smart materials including a real metallic finish centre console, although the two gaping cupholders really ought to have a cover.

Gadget freaks will like the 'connectivity' of two 12v sockets, two USB sockets, an SD card slot,

Infiniti Q50 3.5-litre V6 Hybrid AWD

Price:	from ££41,640
Driving appeal:	★★★★
Image:	★★★★★
Space:	★★★★★
Value:	★★★★
Running costs:	★★★
How green?:	★★★
Best rival:	BMW 3 Series

plus audio and video-in sockets; a real office away from home that also boasts seats designed with space age input from NASA, no less, and lots of legroom thanks to a long wheelbase.

Headroom in the rear is limited for taller people though, while the middle passenger there will hate the high transmission tunnel.

But finding the perfect driving position for the driver is a doddle and I liked the well-crafted manual gear selection steering wheel paddles - a good encouragement to override the slightly plodding seven-speed auto 'box.

Fact is though, you can save money and have the best of the Q50 - the looks and generous standard spec, while also escaping that fly-by-wire steering - by buying the most popular and entry level 170bhp 2.2-litre diesel manual powertrain (from £29,870).




INFINITI
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Infiniti Q50

You feel the pull the moment you see the curves of the Infiniti Q50. But when you get behind the wheel, instinct really takes over. Driving you to open up the V6 hybrid or direct injection turbo-charged Diesel engine, and feel the visceral thrill of world-first Direct Adaptive Steering. To experience connection between car and road like never before.

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Representative Example – Infiniti Q50 2.2 CDI SE 5dr Diesel	
47 Monthly Payments	£269.40
1 Payment of	£418.40
Deposit or Part Ex Value	NIL
Cash Price	£19,300
Amount of Credit	£18,800
Interest Charges	£3,663.38
GMFV – Optional Final Payment (Includes Doc & Option Fee)	£9,883.18
Total Amount Payable	£22,963.38
Borrowing Rate	6.76%
Representative	7.25%
Excess mileage charge, based on 10,000 miles per annum, excess mileage charged at 0.08 pence per mile	

Infiniti Centre Maidstone, Sutton Road, Parkwood, Kent, Maidstone, ME15 9YF, 01622 755531

Insurance subject to status, terms and conditions apply, ask for full written details. Cars shown for illustration purposes only. Finance subject to status. Terms and conditions apply. **You will not own the vehicle until all payments are made.** 18s and over. Guarantee Indemnity may be required.

Model displayed: Infiniti Q50S 2.2d 6MT, 170 horsepower 2.2-litre Diesel engine with 400 Nm of torque. Official fuel economy figures for the Infiniti Q50 range in mpg (1/100 km): urban 50.4 to 29.4 (5.6 to 9.6), extra urban 76.3 to 53.3 (3.7 to 5.3), combined 64.2 to 41.5 (4.4 to 6.8). CO₂ emission: 114 to 159 g/km.

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ix35

Personal Contract Purchase Representative Example
ix35 S 1.6 GDI

36 Monthly Payments Of	£239	Total Amount Payable	£18,688.90
Customer Deposit	£4,092.40	Optional Final Payment	£5,992.50
Total Deposit	£4,092.40	Duration of Agreement	36 months
Cash Price of Vehicle	£17,000	Representative APR %	5.9% APR
Total Amount of Credit	£12,907.60	Fixed Interest Rate % p.a.	3.04%
Interest Charges	£1,688.90	Excess Mileage Charge Per Mile	14.9p
		Annual Mileage	10,000

Santa Fe

Personal Contract Purchase Example
Santa Fe Style 2.2 CRDi

36 Monthly Payments Of	£299	Total Amount Payable	£31,018.57
Customer Deposit	£9,544.57	Optional Final Payment	£10,710
Total Deposit	£9,544.57	Duration of Agreement	36 months
Cash Price of Vehicle	£28,385	Representative APR %	5.9% APR
Total Amount of Credit	£18,840.43	Fixed Interest Rate % p.a.	3.04%
Interest Charges	£2,633.57	Excess Mileage Charge Per Mile	14.9p
		Annual Mileage	10,000



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Motorline Hyundai – Canterbury 01227 817555 Units 2b & 2c, Westminster Road, Canterbury CT1 1YY

Motorline Hyundai – Maidstone 01622 624070 Bircholt Road, Parkwood, Maidstone ME15 9YN



Fuel consumption in MPG (l/100km) for Hyundai ix35 S 1.6 GDI: Urban 34.4 (8.2), Extra Urban 47.1 (6.0), Combined 41.5 (6.8), CO₂ Emissions 158 g/km. Fuel consumption in MPG (l/100km) for Hyundai Santa Fe Style 2.2 CRDi 5 seat: Urban 37.7 (7.5), Extra Urban 54.3 (5.2), Combined 46.3 (6.1), CO₂ Emissions 159 g/km. Fuel consumption: figures shown are based on official EU test figures. These are to be used as a guide for comparative purposes and may not reflect all driving results.

YOU WILL NOT OWN THE VEHICLE UNTIL ALL PAYMENTS ARE MADE. Deposit from 0-40% available. At the end of the agreement there are 3 options: (i) Renew: Part exchange the vehicle, (ii) Retain: Pay the Optional Final Payment to own the vehicle or (iii) Return the vehicle. Further charges may be made subject to mileage and condition of the vehicle. WE CAN INTRODUCE YOU TO A LIMITED NUMBER OF CAREFULLY SELECTED FINANCE PROVIDERS. WE MAY RECEIVE A COMMISSION FROM THEM FOR THE INTRODUCTION. Terms and conditions apply. Finance subject to status. Applicants must be 18 or over. Guarantees/Indemnities may be required. Hyundai Motor Finance RHL 15K.
Models shown: ix35 S 1.6 GDI at £17,000 OTR in solid paint at no extra cost. Santa Fe Style 2.2 CRDi 4WD 5 seat at £28,385 in metallic paint at £595. On the road (OTR) price shown includes customer saving discount where applicable, VAT where applicable, delivery, vehicle first registration fee, number plates and 12 months' Road Fund Licence. All offers, finance and savings are subject to availability and are only available to private retail customers on new cars purchased and registered in the UK (excluding Channel Islands or Isle of Man), between 1st October and 31st December 2014, inclusive, sourced through Hyundai Motor UK Ltd or its authorised dealers. 15 Year Warranty terms and exclusions apply. Please see www.hyundai.co.uk or ask your local Dealer.

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Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEOM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in vacancies for the following staff

MEDICAL SECRETARY - MARGATE

FULL TIME Hours: 37.5 Salary: £19552.50 per annum

Qualifications and Experience:

- Maths and English GCSE A-C or equivalent
- Audio typing experience
- IT Skills
- 2 years' experience working in a medical environment

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Julie Pain, Administration Supervisor, on 01843 234558

PHYSIOTHERAPY ADMINISTRATOR - MARGATE

PART TIME Hours: 15 per week 1pm-4pm Monday - Friday

Salary: £15,153.19 per annum (pro rata)

Qualifications and Experience:

- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills
- RSA Stage 1 or 2 equivalent
- IT Skills
- 2 - 3 years' administrative experience working in a medical environment

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Adebayo Tijani, Physiotherapy Manager, on 0747 9987931

CLOSING DATE FOR ALL THE ABOVE POSITIONS - 12/12/2014

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Jo Wright, Senior HR Assistant. Telephone: 01304 245961

E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospital is an equal opportunity employer. This position is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.



Spencer Private Hospitals are two hospitals situated in East Kent. The larger of the two hospitals is a 22 bed independent hospital situated at the QEOM Hospital in Margate, whilst the second hospital is a 4 bed independent hospital based at the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford. Both hospitals have a reputation for providing excellent medical and surgical facilities supported by Specialist Consultants, Specialist Nurses and Physiotherapists. We have state of the art diagnostic equipment and exceptionally high standards of nursing care.

The continuing growth of our business has resulted in vacancies for the following staff

Staff Nurse - Ward - Margate

Full Time - Hours: 37.5 - Salary: Dependent on qualifications and experience

- Registered Nurse 1st level
- Evidence of continual professional development
- Experience in a surgical/medical environment with a knowledge and understanding of surgical/medical procedures
- Excellent communication and interpersonal skills

To discuss this opportunity, or to arrange an informal visit, please contact: Mary Guarnieri, Ward Manager on 01843 234249

CLOSING DATE FOR ALL THE ABOVE POSITIONS - 12/12/2014

For a job description and application form please visit www.spencerprivatehospitals.com/careers

Alternatively, please contact Jo Wright, Senior HR Assistant. Telephone: 01304 245961

E-mail: recruitment@spencerhospitals.com

Spencer Private Hospital is an equal opportunity employer. This position is subject to a Disclosure and Barring check.



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The School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. Candidates must be willing to undergo child protection screening appropriate to the post including checks with past employers and via the Disclosure and Barring Service.

Folkestone
Hythe & Romney Marsh
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9th December 2014



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**Behaviour Support
Assistant**

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Kent Salary Range 5

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We are seeking to appoint an experienced and dedicated member of support staff to work alongside the Assistant Headteacher responsible for Behaviour Management and provide key administrative, welfare and progress development support for students.

The ideal applicant will...

- relate well to students, have strong interpersonal skills and demonstrate a high level of emotional intelligence to communicate effectively in sometimes challenging situations;
- be able to liaise and communicate effectively with outside agencies, staff and students;
- be confident to work independently and multi task in a range of areas;
- have good attendance and punctuality record;
- be experienced in monitoring progress using data effectively and implementing creative strategies to ensure achievement of identified SMEH students;
- be a positive role model supporting students with SMEH issues;
- be highly organised and able to manage their time well, when juggling a range of tasks;
- have a cheerful disposition, show confidence and contribute ideas to work within a team;
- demonstrate effective examples of initiatives they have developed in a school to date.

The School has recently had a very positive Ofsted inspection, demonstrating progression on our journey towards becoming an 'outstanding' school. Thamesview is a new school build that benefits from innovative learning environments and state of the art ICT equipment. We are committed to providing high quality learning experiences for our students and to supporting our staff through excellent CPD opportunities.

Further details and an application form can be obtained from our HR Manager on 01474 566552 ext 1120 or email: k.mcgowan@thamesview.kent.sch.uk

Closing Date: 9th December 2014, 9.00am

Interviews: Week Commencing 15th December 2014

CVs without an application form will not be accepted.

We are committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of students.

Appointment to this post will require an Enhanced Disclosure via the Criminal Records Bureau.

Thamesview School operates a non-smoking policy



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LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

NOTICE OF INTENDED LAND DISPOSAL LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 SECTION 123 (2A)

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council intends to dispose of the freehold interest in six areas of land, which are for identification purposes described in the schedule to this notice.

This notice is given in so far as the areas of land consist of or form part of an open space within the meaning of the above Section.

A plan of each piece of land is available to view at the Gateway, 8 Grosvenor Road, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 2AB or at the Weald Information Centre, The Old Fire Station, Stone Street, Cranbrook TN17 3HF.

Objections to the proposed disposals must be made in writing to the Legal Services Manager, Town Hall, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN1 1RS by no later than Friday 12th December 2014.

SCHEDULE

Land to the rear 40-46 Charles Street, Tunbridge Wells, Kent (approximately 0.010 hectares)

Land at Aspen Way, Tunbridge Wells, Kent (approximately 0.001 hectares)

Land on the South Side of Redwings Lane, Pembury, Tunbridge Wells, Kent (approximately 0.026 hectares)

Garages at the Goldings on the North Side of Badsell Road, Paddock Wood, Kent (approximately 0.002 hectares)

Land at Rear of 67 - 73 Goods Station Road, Tunbridge Wells (approximately 0.031 hectares)

Land on the South East Side of North Farm Road, Southborough, Tunbridge Wells, Kent (approximately 0.013 hectares)

John Scarborough, Head of Legal Services

Dated 14 November 2014

PLANNING



THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2010

The following applications have been submitted for consideration by the Council:

Y14/1323/SH - 10 Clifton Crescent Folkestone Kent CT20 2EW - Felling of a row of conifers situated within a conservation area.

Y14/1339/SH - 2 The Dolphins Wellington Place Sandgate Folkestone Kent - Retrospective application for the erection of a front porch.

Y14/1311/SH - Couties Wynde 1 The Square Elham Canterbury Kent - Listed Building Consent for the demolition and rebuild of chimney to the rear (East) elevation.

Y14/1310/SH - Couties Wynde 1 The Square Elham Canterbury Kent - Listed Building Consent for the demolition and rebuilding of chimney to gable end wall (West elevation)

Y14/1315/SH* - Open Space Albert Road Hythe Kent - Listed Building Consent for the erection of 2 No. two storey dwellings with associated parking, turning and landscaping together repairs/rebuilding to the boundary wall.

Y14/1322/SH - Old Castle Stores The Street Lympe Hythe Kent - Felling of a Bay tree situated within a conservation area

Y14/1340/SH - Millside Cannon Street New Romney Kent TN28 8BJ - Reduction down to previous pollard height of 6 metres of a Eucalyptus tree situated within a conservation area

Y14/1341/SH# - St Martins Field Ashford Road New Romney Kent - Works to trees situated within a conservation area to remove encroachment comprising: partial crown lift to a height of 6 metres above ground level on the southern side of a Horse Chestnut (T2) and prune back south eastern extents of the canopy back to boundary line of a Lime (T3).

Representations can be made in writing either on line on the Council's website, by email to planning@shepway.gov.uk or in writing to the Head of Planning and Environmental Health, Shepway District Council, Civic Centre, Castle Hill Avenue, Folkestone, Kent, CT20 2QY. Please always quote the application reference number. Comments should be made in writing within 21 days from the date of publication. Please note that any representations received will be publically viewable on the Council's website.

Some applications can be viewed at other locations in addition to the Civic Centre, Folkestone. The applications are marked as follows:

- The One Stop Shop, Magpies, Church Approach, New Romney

† - Hythe Town Council Offices, Stade Street, Hythe

The applications marked (*) do not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

Note: This is not a full list of applications received. All planning applications can be viewed and comments made online at <http://searchplanapps.shepway.gov.uk/online-applications/>.

C Lewis, Head of Planning and Environmental Health
Shepway District Council

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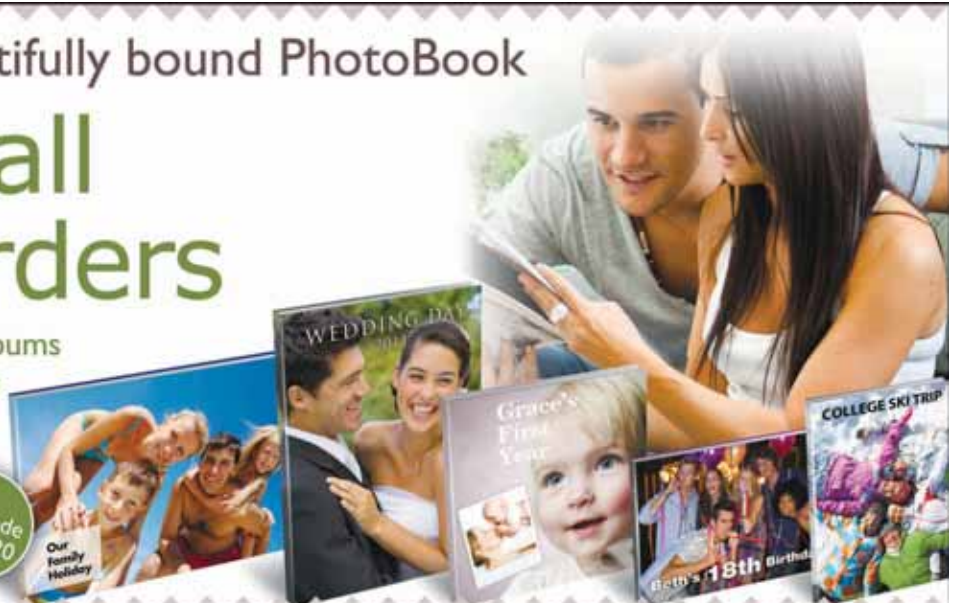
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Trophy clash puts Day vs Ebbsfleet

Linked with the vacant hotseat, draw sends Jamie Day east



Football

By Chris Britcher

chris.britcher@archant.co.uk

WHEN Ebbsfleet United boss Steve Brown walked out of Stonebridge Road for the final time two weeks ago, having been booted out of the club after a 3-0 home defeat, the rumour mill as to who would replace him, began in earnest.

And one of the first and most mentioned names to find themselves linked to the hotseat was Jamie Day.

Day, appointed boss at Welling United in 2009, appeared a sensible and realistic choice.

Typical, then, that when the FA Trophy first round draw was made this week, it should pit the Fleet against the Wings in a mouthwatering clash next weekend.

For Fleet, it may be a chance to run

GROUND: Stonebridge Road will host the mouthwatering cup clash as Jamie Day takes his Welling side to face Ebbsfleet United.

a close rule over one of their managerial shortlist.

For Day, however, all the signs so far are that it will be just another match.

Speaking during the week he said: "I'm obviously flattered to be linked with the Ebbsfleet job, they have a good set up there, but my focus is on Welling."

A familiar face in north Kent non-league circles - he had playing spells for the likes of Welling and Dartford, as well as Dover and Grays - he's quietly gone about making the Wings a force to be reckoned with, have secured the Conference South title in 2013 to guide them into the non-league's top flight.

This year, however, has so far proved a tough one, with the Wings going into this weekend's fixtures lurking perilously close to the relegation zone.

For Ebbsfleet, however, now under the interim stewardship of skipper and academy manager Daryl Mahon, promotion back into the top Conference division remains a realistic goal. Despite putting them in fourth place, Brown still lost his role, but the club retain a play-off spot as the season approaches the half way stage.

It also has some significant financial backing, courtesy of the club's backers KEH - the Middle East-based firm which is also spearheading the London Paramount Resort in nearby Swanscombe.

All of which whets the appetite for next Saturday's FA Trophy clash.

Ebbsfleet, who under Liam Daish lifted the trophy back in 2008, will be keen to prove a point.

Jamie Day keen to prove what Ebbsfleet could be missing out on. Kick-off at Stonebridge Road is 3pm.

Lizzy meets Queen ahead of World Cup task

WINTER Olympic hero Lizzy Yarnold visited Windsor Castle to pick up her MBE on Friday; recognition for her gold medal-winning exploits in Sochi earlier this year.

Yarnold, 26, shot to fame when she became the only member of the Great Britain team in Russia to bring home a gold with success in the skeleton event.

It made her a household name overnight and saw her catapulted into the spotlight.

It comes just days before she flies out to Lake Placid as she begins her bid to defend her world championship title.

The eight-race Viessmann FIBT World Cup comprises of eight races across two continents and seven countries.

Having won the title last year in the



WINNER: Royal date before fight begins to defend her title

run up to Sochi, Yarnold will be hoping to ensure she remains at the top of her sport going in to the new year.

After Lake Placid in the US, the event moves north to Calgary in Canada, then two events in Germany, two in France, one in Austria and ending up at the scene of Yarnold's triumph in February of this year, Sochi.

Born and raised in West Kingsdown, Yarnold returned to Kent after the Winter Games to a hero's welcome, with an open-top bus ride from Sevenoaks to her home village.

Her success continues to gain her recognition too, having been named on the shortlist for the BBC Sport Personality of the Year.

She lines up alongside the likes of Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton and golfer Rory McIlroy.

The awards take place on Sunday December 14 in Glasgow.

Sport Shorts

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Gravesend kickboxer takes European title

AFTER a tough five round battle against a Dutch opponent, Tina 'The Machine' Harvey from Star Kickboxing in Gravesend was crowned the European Champion.

The 30-year-old is no stranger to titles, winning herself the Five Nations champion belt, two British titles as well as a handful of other titles.

And despite being a champion fighter already, Harvey was not complacent going before she got into the ring. Her trainer, Paul Haworth, commended the fighter, saying that she had been working hard in the build up to the match.

The work paid off, as she dominated during the 55.5 kg bantamweight IKF European Championship title fight. She won every round on the judges score cards, and forced an eight-count on her opponent in the second round.

And she had two reasons to celebrate after her title win at the Casino Rooms in Rochester, as she has also just completed her black belt grading.



CHAMP: Tina Harvey added a new belt to her collection



PLATFORM: Harry Lennon wants to dazzle on the Priestfield pitch

Lennon determined to impress Peter Taylor

LOAN signing Harry Lennon is hoping to muscle his way into Peter Taylor's first team plans after securing a short-term deal from Championship side Charlton Athletic.

The 19-year-old centre back, who has led something of a nomadic lifestyle having also spent time at Cambridge this season, will be at Priestfield until January 3.

He was on the bench for last week's 2-2 draw with Port Vale.

He told the club's website: "I heard about the move last Monday and

then the manager rang me on Wednesday and that's when we agreed everything before I signed on Thursday.

"When I spoke to him everything sounded good, he likes using young players so that was a bonus for me really.

"I'm still only 19 so I'm learning the trade and hopefully I can play a few games. I like defending, I head the ball well and I've got some pace too.

"The lads have been very welcoming, they are all nice people and I've enjoyed it so far."

Dynamos take another ECC loss

THE Invicta Dynamos saw another loss in their final home English Challenge Cup game of the season.

The Mos went 4-0 down in the opening minutes against the Swindon Wildcats, never regaining the initiative in a game which saw them on the wrong end of a 9-5 scoreline.

They did fight back, bringing the

scoreline to 8-5 50 minutes into the match, before the team crumbled again, conceding one final goal before the end.

The match saw the Mos remain near the bottom of the ECC table, after nine games, with just one win amongst them.

Man of the match for the Mos was Juraj Huska.

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